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HISTORY of WAR

Welcome

This is a very special issue of *History of War*. Not only are we presenting you with an additional 32-page photographic supplement commemorating the First World War that started 100 years ago, but we have dedicated a significant proportion of this month's content to the Great War. We believe that the centenary of the conflict deserves recognition in these pages, hence features on how WWI became a truly global conflict, how the mighty Battle of the Somme played out, the endeavours of Harry Patch – the last fighting "Tommy" – and German Generals. All this and more.

Elsewhere in the issue, we feature other aspects of military conflict, including first-hand accounts of WWII from journalists who covered it, an examination of how the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out, and the events that formed the battle that ended the French occupation of Indochina.

Paul Pettengale *Editorial Director*
paul.pettengale@anthem-publishing.com

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Contributors

ANNA PENNICEARD
An award-winning journalist and editor, as well as an avid war-film enthusiast, Anna was this month persuaded to pause her beloved *Band Of Brothers* to update us on the latest military news and opinion from around the world for our Dispatches pages.

STEVE JARRATT
is an accomplished journalist and author, and an expert in military history and weapons of war. As part of his work for *History of War* this month, he researched the life of Harry Patch, the last of the fighting "Tommies" from the First World War.

NICK SOLDINGER
has a long and varied career in magazine journalism, and has travelled to various theatres of war, experiencing combat first-hand. This issue, he explores how the First World War became the very first truly global conflict.

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SAVE MONEY! GET THREE ISSUES OF *HISTORY OF WAR* FOR £3 (PAGE 44).

The many facets of the Great War are covered in this month's issue

Getty Images

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WIN! A COLLECTION OF MILITARY-HISTORY BOOKS p63

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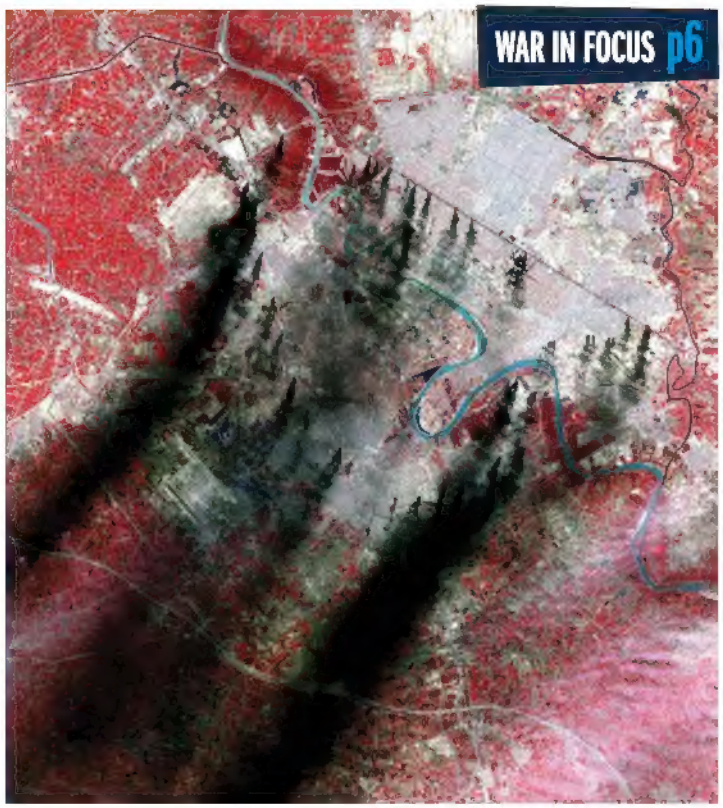

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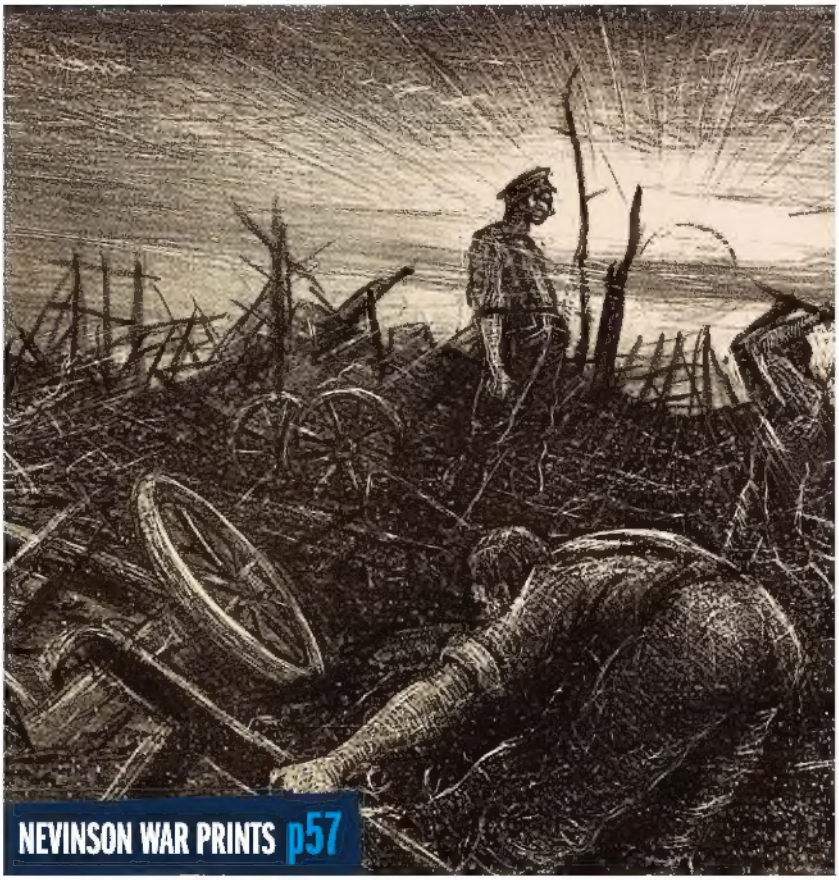

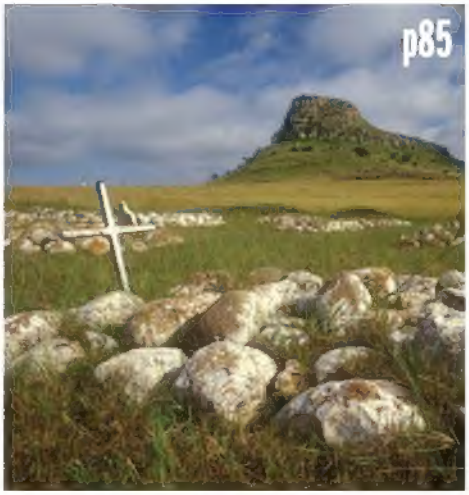

HISTORY of WAR

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Getty Images

WAR FOCUS

THE DARKNESS OF LIGHT

Taken **February 1944**

It's a cruel paradox of war that, sometimes, pretty pictures can come about as a result of death and destruction. A case in point is this photograph of US soldiers congregating in a hospital tent in Italy. While it appears that hundreds of fireflies are buzzing around their heads, the effect has in fact been caused by German shrapnel, which killed five and wounded eight patients in the tent.

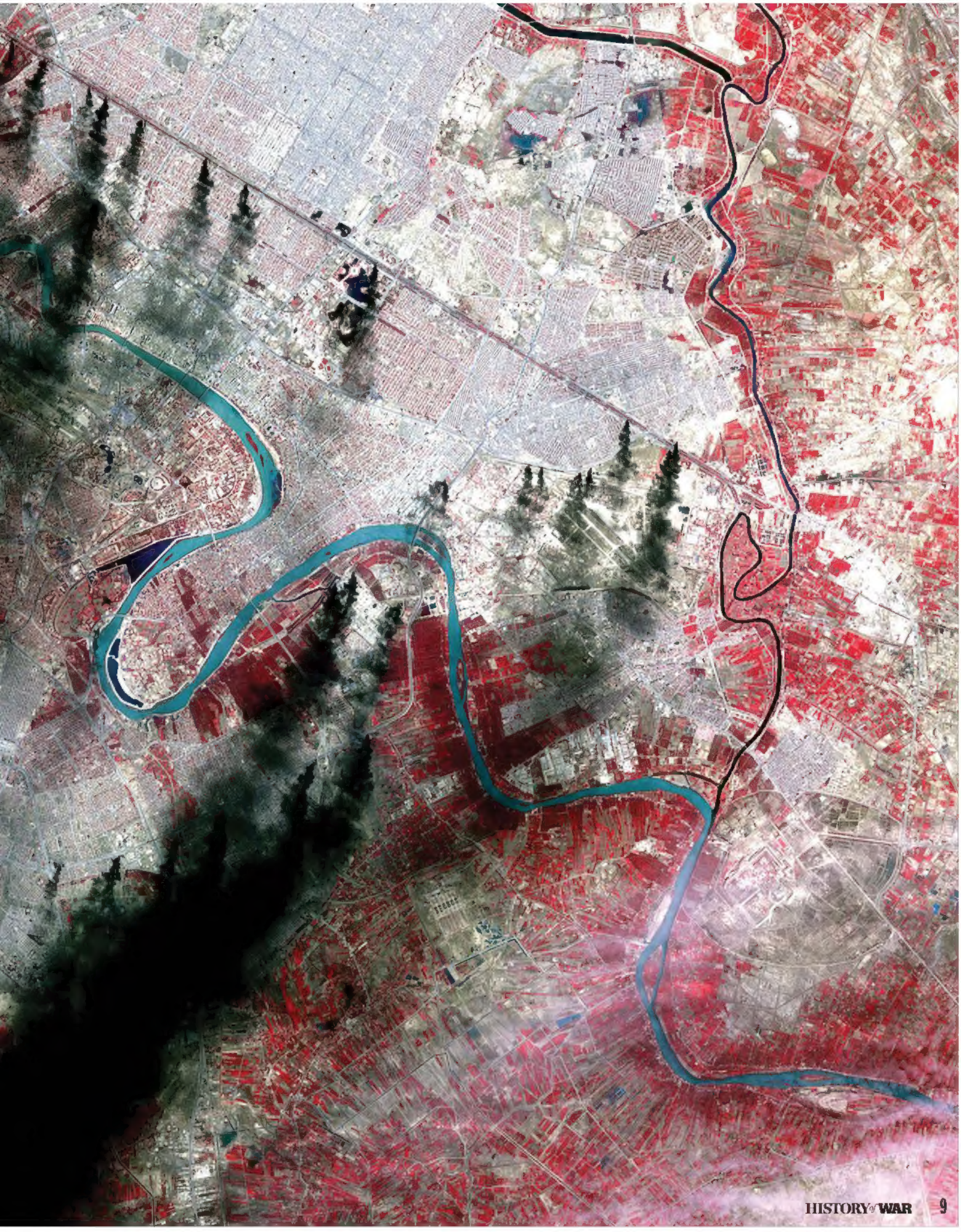
Rex Features

WAR in FOCUS

BAGHDAD BURNS

Taken **March 2003**

Following on from the previous page, here's another example of how warfare can look attractive. In this case, the canvas is the city of Baghdad, photographed by NASA's Terra satellite during the US invasion of Iraq. The black smudges are burning pools of oil from pipelines, while the red areas are vegetation (the unusual colour is caused by the wavelengths used to make the image).



AP

WAR FOCUS

DON'T MAKE A SOUND

Taken **January 1966**

The human cost of war is brought chillingly to the fore in this photograph, as women and children crouch in a muddy canal to take cover from Viet Cong fire at Bao Trai, about 20 miles west of Saigon. Paratroopers of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade (seen in the background) escorted the South Vietnamese civilians through a series of firefights during the US assault on a Viet Cong stronghold.

DISPATCHES

Military news and events from around the globe, including the 70th anniversary of D-Day commemorations, the discovery of some rare posters and the death of an infamous pilot

British veteran Bill Price – who celebrated his 100th birthday in July – made the trip to Gold Beach for the special day

Getty Images

HEROES AND WORLD LEADERS REMEMBER D-DAY, 70 YEARS ON

A hero's welcome awaited the ex servicemen who landed in Normandy for the 70th anniversary of D-Day commemorations. Clutching photographs of their younger selves in uniform, hundreds of veterans travelled to visit the graves of their fallen friends and the towns they liberated seven decades ago. It's estimated that more than 4,000 Allied troops lost their lives on 6 June, the day of the D-Day invasion that gave the Allies a foothold in Nazi-occupied France.

As part of a week-long programme of events, Bayeux Cathedral hosted a service of remembrance, attended by the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall, after which veterans gathered at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery in Bayeux. HRH the Duke of Edinburgh accompanied Her Majesty the Queen, who laid a poppy wreath at the Cross of Sacrifice after a parade and religious service. Also in attendance were US President Barack Obama, Russia's Vladimir Putin and France's François Hollande.

On Sword Beach, Ouistreham – one of the Allies' landing points for the largest amphibious assault in history – almost 2,000 veterans and their families were treated to a 21-gun salute, a flypast from a Lancaster bomber and Spitfires, and a spectacular fireworks display.

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge attended a tea party with former soldiers at Arromanches-les-Bains, near Gold Beach, where a temporary harbour was set up on D-Day for the thousands of British troops to come ashore, and which is now home to a war cemetery. Afterwards, the Duke paid tribute to those who gave their lives in an emotional speech. He said, "They gave up everything for our freedom. They lie now together in the beautifully kept

Her Majesty the Queen was one of several royals who attended the Normandy event to pay their respects to the D-Day heroes

Vessels re-enact the incredible mission of 1944

Prince salutes his fallen comrades

cemeteries that lie on the coast. However, today is also about the young – people of my generation and younger – whose connection to the events of 1944 are largely through hearsay and history books. It is vital that the sacrifice and the reasons for that sacrifice are never forgotten by our generation and generations to come."

Meanwhile, in La Fiere, almost a thousand paratroopers jumped from planes, including a restored C-47 US military transport plane that had dropped Allied troops on the village of Sainte-Mere-Eglise on 6 June 1944 in an incredible aerial spectacle. On the sea, a flotilla of ships led by HMS Bulwark sailed from Portsmouth to Normandy as part of a re-enactment of the Normandy landings.

While the veterans reminisced and exchanged stories of their war experiences in France, one British sailor was unaware he was leading the D-Day news coverage back in the UK. Bernard Jordan, 89, who served on a destroyer in the Second World War, was so determined to be part of the commemorations in Normandy that he hid his medals under his coat, walked out of his East Sussex care home without informing any of the staff, and set off to France via train and ferry. On realising his absence, staff at The Pines, Hove, reported him to police, who launched a missing person investigation.

Having enjoyed the commemorations, Mr Jordan returned, and now the former Navy Lieutenant – who was awarded an Atlantic Star for service in WWII – looks set to receive another gong. The Mayor of Brighton and Hove Councillor Brian Fitch has put forward a proposal for Mr Jordan to be given the Freedom of the City in honour of his spirit and determination – a description that could be used to sum up the actions of all those who took part in D-Day in 1944. In Mr Jordan's own words: "When I set my mind to something, I do it. This is what us Normandy veterans are like."

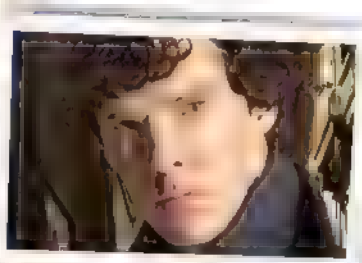
News in Brief

▶ THIEF STEALS VETERAN'S MILITARY MEDALS ON D-DAY ANNIVERSARY

A thief posing as a water-board representative has stolen a war hero's military medals from his home. The 92-year-old veteran from Whetstone, north London – who served with the Grenadier Guards – noticed his 11 military medals were missing from his bedroom on 6 June, after the man was given access to check his water pressure. Colindale police are investigating the crime.

▶ SALTBURN HOSTS ICONIC FOOTBALL MATCH FOR WWI CENTENARY

Two teams dressed in vintage army uniforms battled it out on a makeshift football pitch on Saltburn beach, near Redcar, to remember those who died in the First World War. It was a tribute to the game played between British and German soldiers on the Western Front, when they put down their weapons in no man's land on Christmas Day 1914. Spectators to the event were also treated to a flypast by a Tiger Moth, which dropped 40,000 poppies into the sea.

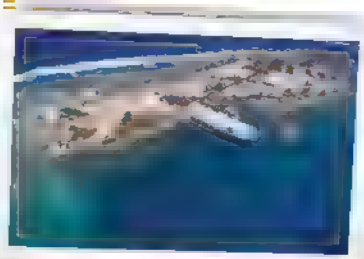


▶ CUMBERBATCH TIPPED FOR LEAD ROLE IN NEW WAR FILM

***Sherlock* star Benedict Cumberbatch is rumoured to be the favourite to take on the role of Captain Stanhope in a brand-new film version of *Journey's End*. RC Sherriff's play, written in 1928, is set in the trenches of northern France towards the end of the First World War.**

▶ SKELETONS OF JAPANESE WWII SOLDIERS WASHED FROM GRAVES

Rising sea levels around the Marshall Islands, which lie between Hawaii and Australia, are to blame for the unexpected reappearance of Japanese skeletons buried near the coastline during WWII. The US Navy helped identify the bodies in order to repatriate them. The high tides also washed up unexploded bombs and military equipment.



HISTORIAN ADVOCATES TEACHING WAR LIKE A GAME

"STRATEGIC CALCULATION" WOULD AID PUPILS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE GREAT WAR, SAYS PROFESSOR

Is the best way to teach the Great War to schoolchildren by turning it into a strategic game? Historian, author and broadcaster Niall Ferguson has argued that a multi-player game similar to a computer-strategy format would help children to understand logistics.

The professor, who now teaches at Harvard University, was speaking at the Hay Festival in Herefordshire as part of a panel discussing "How to Teach the Great War". He claimed that this teaching method would help make WWI seem more immediate to young people.

He said, "My students have a keen sense and interest in strategic calculation... This is especially true of the boys because of game-playing... The interesting opportunity that exists today is to make them see the First World War as a game. A very, very expensive and very, very bloody game in which strategic decision-making produces a disastrous outcome... It plays to the strengths of this generation."

Broadcaster Kate Adie, who was also present on the panel, disagreed with Ferguson. She argued that this method of teaching would not help children learn about the human consequences of war, and would remove understanding of the real loss of life, adding, "War is not a game."

NIALL FERGUSON CLAIMED THAT THIS TEACHING METHOD WOULD HELP MAKE WWI SEEM MORE IMMEDIATE TO YOUNG PEOPLE

...Call of Duty are hugely popular among young people – but can they be educational?

BRITISH PILOT WHO BOMBED HITLER'S HEADQUARTERS DIES

War veteran Fred Arnold, whose last operation in WWII was bombing Adolf Hitler's Eagle's Nest, has died aged 92.

Arnold, from Stevenage, Hertfordshire, recalled in his memoirs how he took part in the aerial assault in 1945 when he was 24 and serving as a flight engineer in the RAF. The target was Kehlsteinhaus, the fortress built on top of a mountain 9,300 feet above sea level in celebration of Hitler's 50th birthday. As the area was very mountainous, the Lancaster bombers and Spitfire escorts had trouble getting a line on the target but, after a few runs, they succeeded in hitting the barracks.

Arnold nearly lost his life during WWII. In France, a Lancaster he was flying began a tailspin and fell 8,000 feet after sustaining damage to its wing. Luckily, he managed to right the plane and avert disaster.

The Eagle's Nest is now a popular tourist attraction, complete with a shop and a restaurant

WWI soldier's diary found hidden away in antique box

Thirty years ago, Michigan resident Jan Oendag was at an auction and successfully bid on a pair of antique boxes for her daughters. After her purchase, Oendag was told that at the bottom of the box was a place where people used to store their Bibles, but when she investigated she found a big surprise. Inside the space wasn't a Bible but a diary, written by a soldier as he fought in World War One.

She said, "It's basically a day-by-day experience of what he went through in the war, where a couple of his buddies got shot. He thought one of the days was going to be his last, but he lived."

Now, Oendag wants to return the diary to the family of the diary's author, but there aren't many clues to go on. The wooden box has an inscription on the lid, which says: "The Sweetest Story Ever Told". Other items in the box included two empty envelopes from 1946, with stamps from the Netherlands. One is addressed to J Bouman, 3245 Highgate Road SW, Grand Rapids, MI, and the name Bouman also appears in the diary.

If you can help, get in touch with problemsolvers@fox17online.com, who are assisting Oendag with the search.

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Events

▶ 1-3 AUGUST
Military and Flying Machines Show
See hundreds of aircraft at this massive annual event. Damyns Hall Aerodrome, Upminster, Essex.
07543 881528; www.militaryandflyingmachines.org.uk

▶ 1-23 AUGUST
Edinburgh Military Tattoo
Performers, both military and civilian, will take part against the spectacular backdrop of Edinburgh Castle.
www.edinburghfestivals.co.uk/festivals/military-tattoo

▶ 2-3 AUGUST
Steam Fayre and Vintage Rally
Last year, there were more than 50 military vehicles and exhibits, including a replica Spitfire.
thecharltons@coxsfarm.wanadoo.co.uk

▶ 2-3 AUGUST
The Yesteryear Festival
Includes military vehicles, more than 50 stalls, a beer tent and off-road facilities. Collop Gate Farm, Heywood, Greater Manchester.
alisonmcguigan@hotmail.co.uk

▶ 3-9 AUGUST
Hayfield WWI Commemorations
Displaying military artefacts, including family mementoes, photos and poetry. There will also be daily events. Village Hall and Gardens, Hayfield High Peak, Derbyshire.
hayfieldrbl@yahoo.co.uk

▶ 4 AUGUST
First World War Commemorations
Featuring WWI tanks in action, the Great War Cavalry display team, plus living history, special talks and more. Bovington Tank Museum, Dorset.
01929 462359; www.tankmuseum.org

▶ 8-10 AUGUST
Military Vehicle Gathering
A good opportunity to browse vintage and replica vehicles. Swinbrook Cricket Club, Oxfordshire.
07801 200662; gilliecoghlan@gmail.com

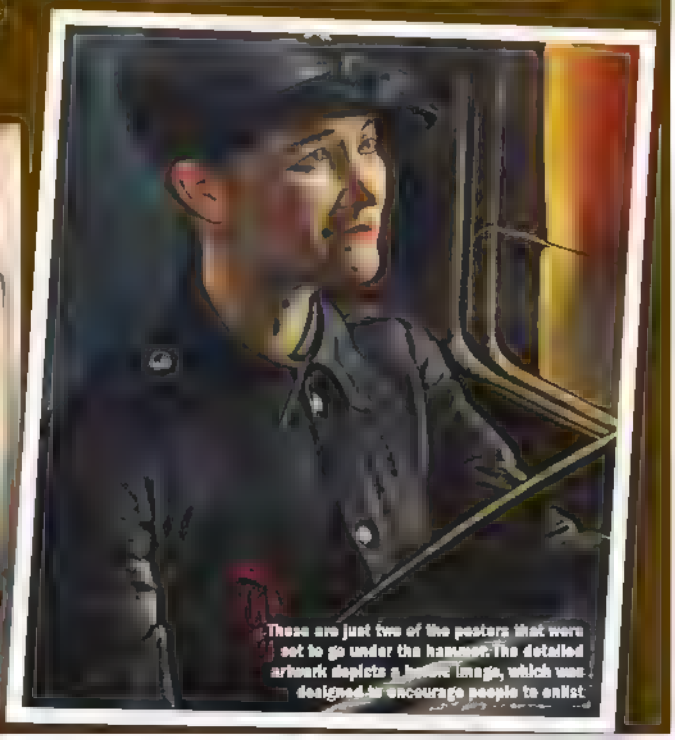
▶ 9-10 AUGUST
Wings and Wheels
13th annual show. Expect around 400 stalls, 350 vehicles, re-enactors and aerial displays. Ursel Airfield, Belgium.
www.wingsandwheels.be

RARE COLLECTION OF WORLD WAR TWO POSTERS DISCOVERED

Relics found in perfect condition in a chest of drawers; set to be auctioned

It might be time to give your garage a clearout, if the latest find of war memorabilia is anything to go by. While rummaging through an old chest of drawers, a Londoner found, folded up and in perfect condition, more than 250 posters from the Second World War.

Included in the haul were around 100 different designs – including some duplicates – depicting scenes of warships, national-security warnings and recruitment drives from the Ministry of Information, the Government department in charge of propaganda. There was also a rare original of the popular "Keep Calm and Carry On" poster, which was never displayed in public. It's thought that someone in the vendor's family was involved in the publishing of the posters, but he can't shed any more light on where they originated from. At the time of writing, the collection was set to go under the hammer at Lawrences Auctioneers in Bletchingley, Surrey, and was expected to raise over £20,000, with each poster valued from £50 to £1,200.



These are just two of the posters that were set to go under the hammer. The detailed artwork depicts a heroic image, which was designed to encourage people to enlist

Bedford schoolgirl receives national recognition for First World War poem

When Rosanna Billington wrote a poem to read at a local memorial service, she had no idea it would be the start of a host of invitations to commemorative events nationwide.

The 13-year-old Bedford Girls' School pupil penned *Why Do The Poppies Fall?* to mark the centenary of the First World War. Since then, she has been asked to read it at church services and events throughout Bedfordshire, including the British Legion Variety Show in Flitwick, and the Royal British Legion County Carol Service. A copy has also been sent to Her Majesty The Queen.

Her Headmistress, Jo Mackenzie, was thrilled with the achievement, saying, "We are extremely proud of Rosanna and the recognition her beautiful poem has received."

You can hear Rosanna read her poem at Bedford's annual River Festival along the River Great Ouse on the weekend of 19-20 July.

HOLLYWOOD HOTSHOT FILMED D-DAY IN COLOUR

FILM CANISTERS FOUND IN ATTIC REVEALED INCREDIBLE IMAGES OF NORMANDY CAMPAIGN; AVAILABLE TO BUY ON DVD

In this, the 70th anniversary of D-Day, it's worth reminding ourselves that there's some astonishing colour footage of the campaign out there.

American George Stevens Jr could not have believed his luck when, following the death of his Hollywood movie-director father, he uncovered some rather special film canisters in his attic. He was amazed to find that they contained the only Allied colour footage of the Second World War known to have been taken to date.

The film showed his 37-year-old father, George Stevens, who, while heading up the combat motion-picture coverage of the war for General Dwight Eisenhower, made a 16mm colour film of his own. Part of the film was made on board warship HMS Belfast as it headed to Nazi-occupied France on D-Day – 6 June 1944 – and continued with scenes of the bombed French towns, as well as German soldiers being taken as prisoners of war.

Stevens Jr produced an Emmy award-winning documentary, *George Stevens: D-Day To Berlin*, in 1994, 50 years after his father filmed the images. He said: "It is the greatest body of colour film World War Two was very much a black and white war... That's how we saw it. And suddenly, to see it in colour, it just takes on a whole other dimension."

George Stevens was a noted Hollywood director and won an Academy Award for Best Director twice – first, for *A Place In The Sun* in 1951 and then for *Giant* in 1956. His son's documentary is available now at Amazon, priced £4.99.

STEVENS JR WAS ASTONISHED TO FIND THAT THE CANISTERS CONTAINED THE ONLY ALLIED COLOUR FOOTAGE OF WWII KNOWN TO DATE

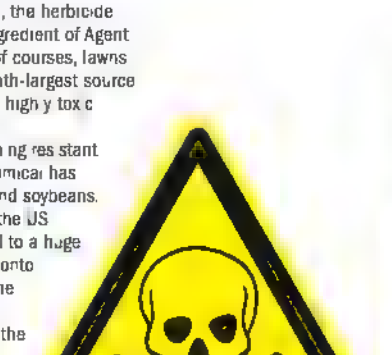
COULD VIETNAM WAR TOXIN BE ON THE INCREASE?

The damaging effects of Agent Orange on the health of Vietnamese people and American war veterans have long been documented, after deformities, cancers and birth defects were attributed to the toxic chemicals used to defoliate jungles during the Vietnam War.

Today, an ingredient of that chemical, the herbicide 2,4-D – considered to be a less-toxic ingredient of Agent Orange – is widely used in the US on golf courses, lawns and in agriculture, but it's also the seventh-largest source of dioxin in the environment. Dioxins are highly toxic environmental pollutants.

Due to the fact that weeds are becoming resistant to leading herbicide glyphosate, Dow Chemical has genetically engineered varieties of corn and soybeans. Should these new crops be approved by the US Department of Agriculture, this could lead to a huge increase in the amount of 2,4-D sprayed onto crops, and therefore a huge increase in the number of people exposed to the toxin.

Campaigners in the US are fighting the approval of Dow's genetically modified crops, and when *History of War* went to press, over 141,000 people had signed a petition opposing their use and the spraying of 2,4-D.



Roman military camp discovered in Germany

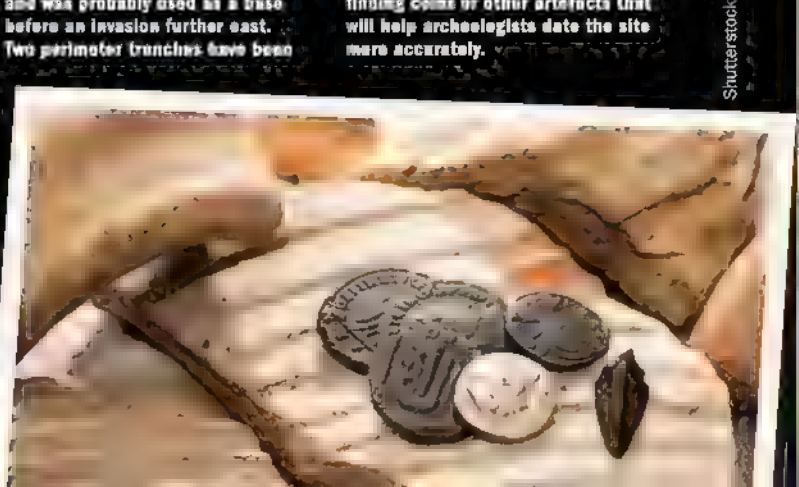
It's the discovery archeologists have been waiting for. A site near Hachelbich in Thuringia, eastern Germany – found in 2010 – appears to have been a temporary Roman military camp.

The encampment, covering 44 acres, is thought to have sheltered a legion of around 5,000 troops, and was probably used as a base before an invasion further east. Two perimeter trenches have been identified, each more than 400 metres long and a metre deep.

Archeologists have also discovered artefacts at the scene, including part of a scabbard, nails from the bottom of Roman boots and a piece of horse tackle, dated somewhere in the first two centuries AD.

Excavations are set to continue after a crop harvest, in the hope of finding coins or other artefacts that will help archeologists date the site more accurately.

Shutterstock



Events

▶ 16-17 AUGUST
Lacock at War
The pretty National Trust village of Lacock is the setting for this military festival, which will feature everything from re-enactors to trade stands, a beer tent to a hog roast, a fly-past to period music. Lacock Village, near Chippenham.
www.westwiltsmvt.co.uk

▶ 23-25 AUGUST
Military Odyssey
Take a journey through 2,000 years of military history, featuring 4,000 Romans, Vikings, Napoleonic infantry, and American Civil War and WWII soldiers – all over 200 acres.
The Kent Show Ground, Detling, Kent.
www.military-odyssey.com

▶ TO AUGUST
IWM Duxford: The Grand Tour
A guide will show you around the Land Warfare, American Air Museum, Conservation in Action, Battle of Britain and AirSpace exhibitions.
IWM Duxford, Cambridgeshire.
01223 835000;
www.military-odyssey.com

AND DON'T FORGET THESE EVENTS LATER IN THE YEAR...

▶ 6-7 SEPTEMBER
Southend Air Show and Military Festival
The largest free air show in Europe, attracting around half a million visitors, who come to see displays by all manner of aircraft.
www.southendairshow.co.uk

▶ 4-5 OCTOBER
Military Revival
Featuring military vehicles and living-history demonstrations galore.
Old Buckenham Airfield, Norfolk.
01953 860806;
www.militaryrevival.com

▶ 16 NOVEMBER
Great Malvern Military Convention
Over 240 pitches offering military uniforms, badges, medals, books, weapons and lots more.
Three Counties Showground, Malvern.
www.militaryconvention.co.uk

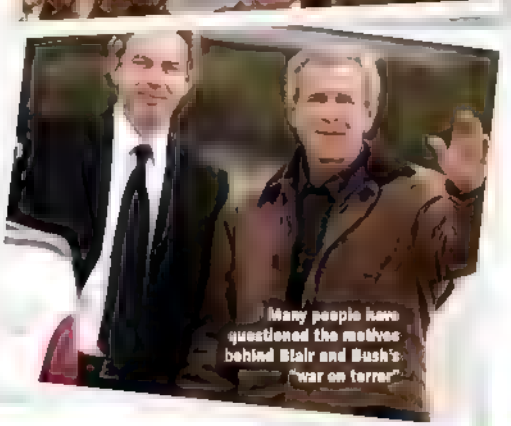
FIRST AND SECOND WORLD WAR FIGHTER PLANES WOW VISITORS TO CZECH REPUBLIC AIR SHOW

Spitfires were among the attractions at the Prague show

Fans of military fighter planes were in for a treat at the 24th Aviation Fair at Pardubice Airport, Prague, in June. The event gathered together a plethora of iconic aircraft from the past century, many of which gave flypasts as re-enactors in military costume engaged in mock skirmishes below.

However, the centrepiece of the show was a breathtaking aerial display called "Knights of the Sky", in which daredevil pilots flew replicas of planes used by Britain and Germany during the First World War, to mark the centenary of the start of that conflict. Planes "doing battle" to the collective gasps of the gathered masses included a British Sopwith 1 1/2 Strutter biplane and a remote-controlled German "Fokker Eindecker" monoplane. The Sopwith was the first British fighting aircraft that had a synchronised machine gun, which meant it was able to fire forwards without hitting the plane's blades, and they were used to escort bombers and carry out raids themselves.

MANY ICONIC AIRCRAFT GAVE FLYPASTS AS RE-ENACTORS IN MILITARY COSTUME ENGAGED IN MOCK SKIRMISHES BELOW


Many people have questioned the motives behind Blair and Bush's "war on terror"

Independent

Excerpts from Blair and Bush talks to be made public at last

But campaigners are demanding the release of full transcripts

Long delays in the publication of the Chilcot report into the Iraq War may finally be over, after the Government agreed a deal in principle to release the gist of the conversations between former US President George W Bush and former Prime Minister Tony Blair. However, Blair is under significant pressure from campaigners to make public *all* of the information, which includes 25 notes from Mr Blair to Mr Bush, along with more than 130 records of conversations between them.

Sir John Chilcot, chair of the inquiry, wrote to Sir Jeremy Heywood, the Cabinet Secretary, saying, "Detailed consideration of gists and quotes requested by the inquiry from communications between the UK Prime Minister and the President of the United States has now begun. It is not yet clear how long that will take, but the inquiry and the Government should work to complete the task as soon as possible."

Mr Blair refused to be drawn when asked about the Chilcot inquiry at the beginning of June, stating, "In respect of Chilcot, I'll leave that to another day."

LETTERS

Make your thoughts and opinions known by writing to *History of War*. Email historyofwar@anthem-publishing.com or send letters to the address below

AIRBORNE HERO

Dear Sir,

My father, David Tharp, wrote a letter home one month before he jumped with the 101st Airborne on D-Day – 6 June 1944. In it, he wrote, "Ever hear about a man whose life hangs by a thread? Well, my silk parachute is my silent weapon, and my life hangs by its thread."

Truer words could not be spoken, as all of those men's lives hung by a thread. Dad would next write about ten days after his jump: "The people seem very glad that we are here. But my French not being very good, I can't understand but damn little. I've been taking some pictures of everyday life; some of my buddies and me. The country side is covered with hedgerows – much the same as England, only the hedges are higher and the fields are smaller. They have their small villages, which seem rather nice – or rather, I imagine they used to be."

On 20 June 1944, Dad would write again: "I suppose you've heard through the news broadcast or in the papers about what the troopers have been doing over here. Well, here is a bit of news: our unit has been awarded the Presidential Citation for extraordinary service and heroism in performing our duties on 6 June 1944 – something to be proud of."

The 101st Airborne Division first saw combat during the Normandy invasion. As part of the VII Corps assault, they jumped in the dark to seize positions west of Utah Beach. Given the mission of anchoring the corps' southern flank, the division was also to eliminate the Germans' secondary beach defences, allowing the seaborne forces of the 4th Infantry Division, once ashore, to continue inland. The "Screaming Eagles" [the name given to the 101st Airborne] were to capture the causeway bridges that ran behind the beach between St Martin-de-Varreville and Pouppeville. In their southern sector, they were to seize the La Barquette lock and destroy a highway bridge north-west of the town of Carentan, along with a railroad bridge further west.

In one of his later letters, Dad wrote, "So they are praising the paratroopers back home, are they? Well, I can say that they deserve it and then some. As for me, I'm mystified with my life and body intact. Keep that chin up. I'll be back someday."

And he did indeed come back, miraculously making it through the Normandy campaign, Carentan (Purple Heart Lane), Holland and the Battle of the Bulge. Little could he have known then that his letters and sentiments would be whispered 70 years later in dedication and tribute to all of those who served. My father's letters and sentiments – which can be found in the book *Comes A Soldier's Whisper* – resonate with servicemen today, and make a great gift for the veteran in your life or anyone who lived during The Greatest Generation.

Thank you so much, Dad, and to all of those men and women who fought to protect the world from tyranny on that fateful day 70 years ago!

Jenny Lasala *via Facebook*

A ROMAN GOOD READ

Dear Sir,

I have just received my subscriber copy of issue five of *History of War*. Although my interest is primarily in 20th-century military conflict (WWI and WWII especially), I found the lead feature on the life of Julius Caesar fascinating reading. I like the way you manage to balance the styles and "weight" of your articles. I read other history magazines and they tend to be fairly "samey" all the way through. One thing, though – can we please have fewer reviews?

Andy Driscol *via email*

Do you know anyone who landed by parachute in Normandy during the D-Day campaign? We would love to hear their story

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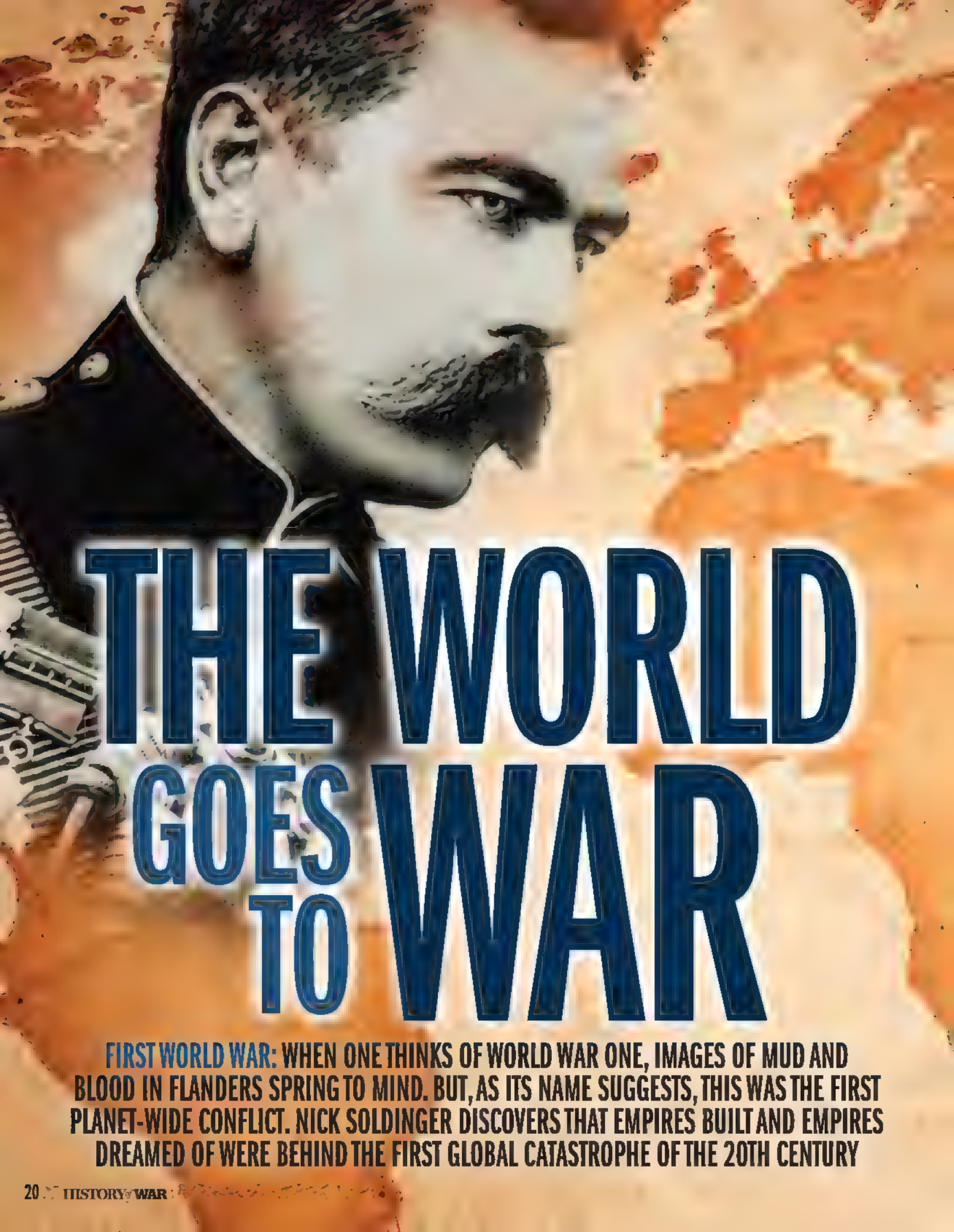


THE WORLD GOES TO WAR

FIRST WORLD WAR: WHEN ONE THINKS OF WORLD WAR ONE, IMAGES OF MUD AND BLOOD IN FLANDERS SPRING TO MIND. BUT, AS ITS NAME SUGGESTS, THIS WAS THE FIRST PLANET-WIDE CONFLICT. NICK SOLDINGER DISCOVERS THAT EMPIRES BUILT AND EMPIRES DREAMED OF WERE BEHIND THE FIRST GLOBAL CATASTROPHE OF THE 20TH CENTURY

THE QUESTION WAS, HOW DO YOU TOPPLE THE GREATEST EMPIRE THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN? THE KAISER HAD A PLAN...

IN 1908, IN AN INTERVIEW WITH *The Daily Telegraph*, Kaiser Wilhelm II hinted at his vision of the future. "Germany is a young and growing empire," he told the man in the tweed suit from the news desk, who hurriedly scribbled down the words. "She has a worldwide commerce and must have a powerful fleet to protect that commerce in even the most distant seas. Moreover, she expects those interests to go on growing, and she must be able to champion them manfully in any quarter of the globe."

"Kaiser Bill" had long been a champion of Weltpolitik, the belief that by transforming Germany into a world power through an aggressive foreign policy, national pride would be generated among its working classes and bring the country unimaginable wealth. In short, he wanted an empire to rival Britain's – but to achieve such a goal, he would, in effect, need to replace it. The question was, how do you topple the greatest empire the world has ever known? The Kaiser had a plan...

At its peak, the British Empire was immense. Schoolboys from London to Lahore, Kingston to Queens and would marvel at the pinkish-red territories in their standard-issue atlases, as their teacher proudly told them that the empire now encompassed no less than a quarter of the planet. But while this huge realm was undoubtedly Britain's greatest strength, it was also her greatest weakness. By 1914, it was so vast that it was difficult to defend – and yet, if war came, losing it would be fatal for Britain's chances of victory. When war did, of course, come, the Kaiser and his Generals realised that by attacking Britain's empire, they could draw vital supplies and resources away from the Western Front, where the decisive battles were being fought, and maybe – just maybe – start to raise German flags over lands where the Union Jack had once fluttered.

The Kaiser's Jihad

At the outbreak of war, around 160 million Muslims lived under British rule, and the Kaiser set about orchestrating a Jihad against the British in an attempt to bring about the empire's collapse from within. To help him spark this worldwide revolution, he sought the help of another once-mighty empire – Turkey's.

For 450 years, the Ottoman Empire had dominated Asia Minor, North Africa and the Middle East. But by the start of the 20th Century, it was a fading power. In fact, the Sick Man of Europe, as it was called, was on the brink of collapse, and had only been saved by a group of nationalist reformers known as the Young Turks. In 1909, led by their military commander, Enver Pasha, the Young Turks had overthrown Sultan Abdul Hamid II, replaced him with his brother Mehmed V as their puppet, and begun a programme of modernisation. Pasha knew, however, that Turkey was still vulnerable and had ▶

DEATH TOLL
MORE THAN 65 MILLION SOLDIERS FROM 30 COUNTRIES FOUGHT IN THE WAR, WITH THE LOSS OF NEARLY TEN MILLION LIVES. THE ALLIES LOST AROUND SIX MILLION, WHILE THE CENTRAL POWERS LOST FOUR MILLION.

Getty Images

turned to Germany, a country he greatly admired, for support. The Kaiser had obliged, but five days after the First World War broke out, he called in the debt. On 2 August 1914, Turkey signed a secret pact with Germany, guaranteeing her the support of its 800,000-strong army.

The idea of a Jihad appealed to the Young Turks – not because they were fanatical Muslims (they were, in fact, more interested in turning Turkey into a modern, progressive, even secular state), but because they wanted to unite the Turkic people in a new empire. The German idea of fostering a Jihad was an ideal way of achieving just that. The giant game of Risk was about to start, and the dice would first be thrown in southern Russia.

Cold Turkey

In 1878, Russia had seized a chunk of Ottoman land along its Caucasian border, and Pasha was desperate to retake what he saw as Turkish soil. The Germans, already at war with Russia, fanned the flames of Pasha's resentment and, in December 1914, he sent his soldiers in. They marched through the Allahüekber Mountains in order to encircle the Russian force at Sarikamis – an ill-conceived plan. The Russians retreated before the Turks got there, leaving the mighty Russian winter to do their fighting for them. As Napoleon might have told Pasher, wage a war in Russia in the wintertime and you'll watch your army vanish. The Turks lost 25,000 men to the cold before even engaging the enemy. Pasha's great crusade was turning into a catastrophe – not that he was about to shoulder the blame.

Despite Pasha's belief that this was sacred Turkish territory, the region he'd invaded was actually a hotbed of ethnic friction, with Turks, Russians, Kurds, Georgians and Armenian Christians scattered throughout. The last of these groups would be scapegoated for Pasha's misjudgement, and the price would be as high as any people have ever paid in the whole of human history.

General Erich von Falkenhayn (left) and the Turkish General Djemal Pasha walk past an honorary battalion during von Falkenhayn's visit to Turkish troops in Jerusalem

PA Photos

BATTLING DISEASE

NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF THE MILITARY DEATHS IN WWI WERE ON THE BATTLEFIELD, WHILE MOST OF THE REMAINING CASUALTIES WERE CAUSED BY SPANISH FLU.

As the Russians advanced, the Turks fell back through Armenian areas. Despite there being no Armenian resistance movement against the Turks, one was invented by Pasha to explain his army's rout. They were, he insisted, being stabbed in the back. By April 1915, the Turks began exterminating the Armenians. Able-bodied males were either shot or forced into slave labour, while the women, children and elderly were deported. Death marches, punctuated with frequent rapes and massacres, took them south to concentration camps in the Syrian Desert. Nothing like it had ever been witnessed in the modern age, and the word "genocide" was actually coined to describe what was happening. By the time it was over, an estimated 1.5 million people were dead.

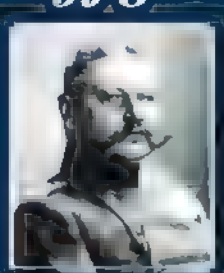
The Turkish attack on Russia had convinced Winston Churchill – at the time Britain's first Lord of the Admiralty – that the Allies needed to open up a second front. Destroying Turkey, he reasoned, could turn the course of the war. It would cut Germany's route to the East, unlock the Balkans and open up Russia via the Black Sea. If the Allies could breach the narrow Dardanelles Strait leading into the Sea of Marmara, Istanbul would fall, and with it Turkey. Strategies were hastily drawn up and an invasion force gathered. The Kaiser's devious plan, it seemed, was starting to work.

Dardanelles disaster

On 18 March 1915, an Anglo-French fleet consisting of 18 battleships, plus various cruisers and destroyers, attacked the Dardanelles. A massive naval

Key figures

Wiki Photos



PAUL VON HINDENBURG
Field Marshal Hindenburg was called out of retirement at the start of the war and formed a powerful partnership with Ludendorff, securing a huge victory over the Russians at Tannenberg. A national hero, he went on to become President of Germany.

ERICH LUDENDORFF
As Quartermaster General, Ludendorff was the driving force behind Germany's military, and the architect of many victories on both the Eastern and Western Fronts. After the war, his "stab in the back" theories helped to spark the Nazism of Adolf Hitler's Germany.

SIR DOUGLAS HAIG
While he's been labelled a "Butcher" who wasted millions of lives, it could be argued that Field Marshal Haig followed the only course open to him in trying to wear down the German war machine. He won many victories and oversaw the mechanisation of the army.

FERDINAND FOCH
After the failed invasion of Germany, Foch oversaw the "Miracle of the Marne", halting the enemy advance on Paris. He co-ordinated well with other commanders, and further success in Italy saw him become Allied Supreme Commander on the Western Front.

JOHN J PERSHING
Selected to command the American Expeditionary Force in 1917, Pershing set about the supply and training of a professional army, which grew to more than two million men by 1918. His policy of aggressive frontal assault resulted in high casualties.

MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATÜRK
Given command of the army when the Ottoman Empire entered the war, Atatürk anticipated where the Allies would attack and successfully defended Gallipoli. He also won key victories against Russia. He went on to become the founder of modern Turkey.

British troops land on the Turkish enemy on 25 April 1915

bombardment smashed into the Turkish defences, but the highly mobile batteries there ensured that the Turks' guns survived. When the Allied ships attempted to push through the Strait, the guns were simply wheeled back into position and the ships picked off with ease. Three battleships were sunk, three were crippled and a further four were badly damaged. By nightfall, the Allies had lost over 700 men.

It was decided that the Strait must be seized before attempting another breach, and plans were made for an amphibious landing. On 25 April, some 70,000 troops hit the beaches along the Gallipoli peninsula. Men from the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) joined French and British soldiers in the assault. For many, it was their first experience of combat, and those who survived it would be haunted forever.

From the start, the Allied commanders made calamitous mistakes. Among the first and biggest was the ANZAC landing. Under cover of darkness, around 16,000 men struggled ashore with pack, pick, shovel and rifle. As the sun rose, they discovered they'd been put ashore in the wrong place, on a narrow strip of land penned in by steep hills, from which the Turks poured down fire upon them. This cauldron of death was to become known as ANZAC Cove, named for the slaughter that took place there. Although the ANZACs managed to establish a beachhead, the Turks under the command ▶

MODERN WARFARE

WWI WAS DEFINED BY TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES: IT WAS THE FIRST WAR TO SEE THE WIDESPREAD USE OF TANKS, AIRCRAFT AND THE FLAME-THROWER, AND SIGNALLED THE DEMISE OF TRADITIONAL CAVALRY.

FOR MANY, IT WAS THEIR FIRST EXPERIENCE OF COMBAT, AND THOSE WHO SURVIVED IT WOULD BE HAUNTED FOREVER

Ambitions In Asia

As a relatively new nation, Germany had come late to the game of empire-building. By the outbreak of WWI, she had just three colonies in Africa, as well as a number dotted throughout the Pacific in New Guinea, Samoa, Micronesia, and at Tsingtao on the eastern coast of China.

Britain's own empire was huge by comparison, and would be key to a British victory. It required protecting, though, and to do that, Britain needed to rule the waves. At the war's outset, the Royal Navy was despatched to trap the bulk of the German Navy in the North Sea, where it remained for the duration. The Kaiser was left with just 17 cruisers scattered around the globe with which to harass British colonies and trade routes. By far the biggest concentration of these was in Tsingtao in eastern China, home to the German Navy's East Asia Squadron.

Germany had established a military presence at the port in 1897, affording it a vast area of operations across the South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean. Capturing this vital port and destroying the flotilla of six cruisers based there became an imperative for Britain, but she simply lacked the resources in the region to capture it. So, with the war just two days old, she turned to her ally Japan for military assistance.

Japan had an agenda of its own, so the request suited its ambitions perfectly. On 2 September 1914, it landed around 23,000 troops up the coast from Tsingtao, instantly violating China's neutrality. These were joined by 2,000 British troops, and together they descended on Tsingtao's 4,500-strong garrison; the besieged Germans had no hope of relief.

The Japanese base camp during the siege of Tsingtao

Mary Evans

The port was blockaded and, on 31 October, Japanese artillery started shelling its defences. The intense bombardment went on for a week. Then, on the night of 6 November, a huge force of Japanese infantry swept forward and stormed the German lines. By morning, the garrison had been overwhelmed.

With the colony now in Japanese hands, its imperial ambitions became apparent. Within weeks, it was demanding both territory and trading rights from China, and had seized all of Germany's Asian possessions north of the Equator. Britain had unwittingly empowered Imperial Japan, and set off a chain of events that would lead to the tragedy of Hiroshima. In the meantime, there was Germany's East Asia Squadron to worry about. Having escaped intact, its six cruisers were about to cause the British no end of trouble (see Cruiser Wars, next page).

The Japanese battleship Suwo helped to blockade the German-owned port of Tsingtao

Lord Kitchener inspects Algerian troops in France

Cruiser Wars

In late 1914, after the German Navy had lost its tactically important base at Tsingtao in eastern China, the six cruisers of its East Asia Squadron took to the high seas like pirates, intent on a campaign of hit-and-run harassment of Britain and her allies. "I am homeless," Admiral Maximilian von Spee wrote at the time in the cabin of his flagship SMS Scharnhorst. "I must plough the seas of the world, doing as much mischief as I can."

The mischief began immediately. Splitting his force in two, Von Spee sent the SMS Emden under Captain Karl von Muller to the Bay of Bengal, while he led the remainder of his ships across the Pacific Ocean. Needing coal for his fleet's engines, he made for neutral Chile over 10,000 miles away. On 1 November, off the coast of Coronel, he ran into a British fleet under the command of Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock. Outgunned and outpaced, two of Cradock's cruisers were sunk in a brief engagement that also cost the lives of nearly 1,000 sailors. It was Britain's worst naval defeat for 250 years.

Britain's response was decisive. Two of her latest battle cruisers, HMS Inflexible and HMS Invincible, were despatched from the fleet blockading the German Navy in the North Sea, to hunt down Von Spee and his fleet, and destroy them.

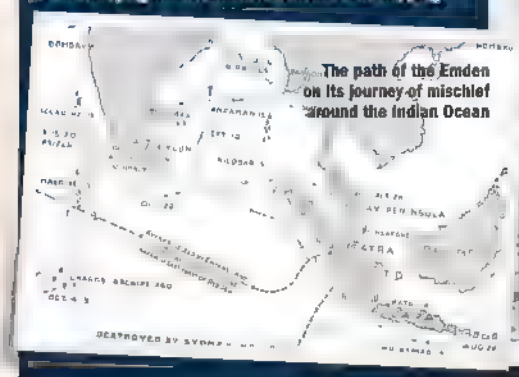
Meanwhile, in the Indian Ocean, Captain von Muller was harrying Indian coastal defences and shipping routes. He'd singlehandedly destroyed 25 merchant ships, shelled Madras, sunk two British warships and managed to bottle the British trade fleet up in the Bay of Bengal. The British war effort was starting to suffer.

Then, on the night of 9 November, he anchored off the Cocos Islands – home to a British wireless station. Von Muller sent a raiding party ashore to destroy it, but before they could, and unbeknownst to Von Muller, the radio operator put out a call for help. The following morning, the Australian cruiser HMAS Sydney caught Von Muller napping, putting him and the Emden out of the pirate business permanently.

A month later, Von Spee's luck also ran out. His British hunters finally found him off the coast of the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic. On 8 December at 1.25pm, he went down on the deck of his ship. The other cruisers were also sunk, with the loss of 2,200 lives, including both of Von Spee's sons.

It was the end of the East Asia Squadron, but the crew of another rogue cruiser, SMS Königsberg, were so inspired by its actions that they helped ensnare the British in a costly African campaign that was to last the length of the war (see Battle for Africa, page 27).

The cruiser SMS Emden in 1914. It spent two months rampaging alone in the Indian Ocean, sinking destroyers and Allied shipping [illegible]



The path of the Emden on its journey of mischief around the Indian Ocean

of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk – who would go on to become Turkey's greatest post-war leader – ensured they would never be able to break out of it. ANZAC casualties on the first day alone are estimated at over 2,000 – that's every eighth man landed.

The British landing at V Beach hadn't fared much better. The plan had been to run the SS River Clyde onto the shore with a cargo of soldiers. Tragically, she ran aground before she got to the beach. Stranded and in range of the Turkish guns, she became a death trap. The men were slaughtered as they scrambled down her sides and tried to make it ashore.

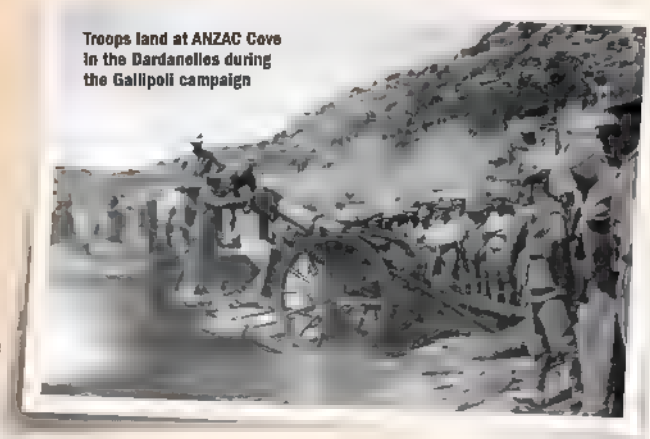
Elsewhere, the landings went better but weren't exploited quickly enough, and, as on the Western Front, the two sides ended up digging in. The style of warfare may have been similar to that being conducted in France, but there the comparisons end. The conditions on the Gallipoli peninsula weren't just harsh, they were horrifying. The days were violently hot and the nights cruelly cold. Supplies were insufficient and what little water could be found frequently turned out to be contaminated. Of the 213,000 casualties the British suffered during the Gallipoli campaign, more than half fell victim to illnesses such as dysentery, typhus and enteric fever.

WOVERSEAS DIPLOMACY
IN EARLY 1917, THE BRITISH DECIPHERED A TELEGRAM TO GERMANY'S MINISTER IN MEXICO, ASKING TO PERSUADE THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT TO INVADE THE UNITED STATES

To make matters worse, the terrain and claustrophobic fighting meant that the dead often remained unburied, and their bloated corpses – alive with flies and rats – were left to cook in the Turkish sun. As spring turned into summer, a ceasefire was called. The stench had grown so bad, neither side could continue the slaughter. The dead were at last buried, and then the killing began all over again.

A firm figure has never been put on the number of losses suffered in this appalling campaign, but it's safe to say the combined figure from both sides totalled more than half a million. What's also impossible to gauge is how much it damaged the Allies' efforts on the Western Front, diverting as it did nearly 600,000 men and millions of tonnes of supplies for over eight months.

By the time what was left of the Allied forces abandoned the Gallipoli peninsula on the night of 20 December, they had lost over a third of their men and achieved precisely nothing. In a move one could never imagine a modern-day politician making, Winston Churchill resigned from office and re-enlisted in the army. He spent the next six months on the frontline in France, atoning for the disaster in the Dardanelles.



Troops land at ANZAC Cove in the Dardanelles during the Gallipoli campaign

Jewel in the crown

The British Empire's Muslims may not have been inspired to an international jihad as Kaiser Bill had hoped, but Enver Pasher had no intention of letting that deter his expansionist plans. He now turned his eyes towards Asia, eventually settling his gaze on the most glittering prize of all. If he could drive an army from his lands in Iraq through Persia, he might just be able to grab India.

A British artillery piece in action near Krithia during the Dardanelles campaign of 1915

Getty Images

He despatched Wilhelm von der Goltz, a German Field Marshal who had spent many years in Turkey as a military advisor, to Baghdad to prepare his army there for an invasion. The British decided to meet the threat head-on. By November 1915, an Anglo-Indian division under the command of Major General Sir Charles Townshend was advancing up the Tigris. He was just 25 miles from Baghdad when the Turks halted his column at Ctesiphon. After fierce fighting, Townshend ordered his troops to withdraw to Kut, a town in the loop in the Tigris. It was a tactically fatal move. The Turks surrounded him and, for the next five months, laid siege.

By January, with every attempt to relieve him repelled by Von Der Goltz, and the food supply dwindling, Hamilton's men were forced to eat their own horses. When they ran out, they started succumbing to starvation and scurvy.

When a final attempt to reach him by river failed, Townshend offered to pay the Turks £1million for the freedom of his garrison. An insulted Pasher refused and, after 146 days of siege, on 29 April 1916 Townshend surrendered. Over 1,750 of his troops had starved to death. The 12,000 survivors were marched through the desert to internment camps, where a further 8,000 would die from disease and starvation by the end of the war. The Siege of Kut, however, would be the last time the Turks humiliated the British.

When David Lloyd George was elected Prime Minister in December 1916, he was so incensed by what was then happening at Kut, he put the destruction of the Ottoman Empire at the top of his to-do list. General Sir Frederick Stanley Maude was told to prepare a new advance up the Tigris. He was given 166,000 soldiers and told that victory was imperative. On 23 February 1917, Maude routed the Turks at the Second Battle of Kut, and a fortnight later conquered Baghdad.

WITH THEIR FOOD SUPPLY DWINDLING, HAMILTON'S MEN WERE FORCED TO EAT THEIR OWN HORSES

Meanwhile, a plan had been hatched to attack the Ottoman Empire from the West. The idea was to advance from the Suez Canal in British-held Egypt across the Sinai desert and drive up the coast of Palestine. To support this risky operation, the British commander of the Palestine Expeditionary Force, General Archibald Murray, literally built his own supply line. Over six months between October 1916 and March 1917, thousands of labourers constructed a vast water pipeline and railway track across the desert. When it was ready, Murray unleashed his forces and descended on Gaza, the northernmost point of the Turks' defensive line.

On 26 March, the British attacked. By the afternoon, the Turks were ready to surrender, when the British cavalry commander General Chetwode, mistakenly thinking that they were being surrounded, ordered his men to withdraw. Without cavalry, the infantry were exposed to counter-attack, so they too were ordered to fall back. It was a mistake that would prove costly. ▶

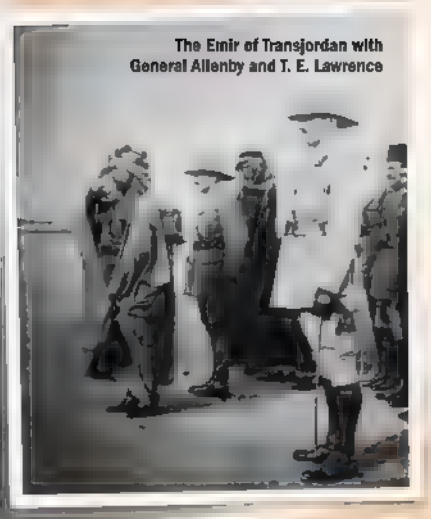
Mary Evans

The British camp at Ali Gharbi in Mesopotamia – now modern-day Iraq

▶ **END OF AN ERA** A Turkish cavalry officer in field uniform. Cavalries played only a minor role at the beginning of the war; by its end, they were obsolete.

Mary Evans

English agent and officer T. E. Lawrence spearheaded an Arab uprising against the Turks. Here, he's pictured with a Bedouin scout in the Sinai desert



The Emir of Transjordan with General Allenby and T. E. Lawrence

On 17 April, Murray struck at Gaza for a second time. This time, the Turks were ready for him. The fighting went on for three days and a British division was all but wiped out in the failed assault. Within weeks, Murray had been replaced by the far more calculating General Edmund Allenby. Realising the odds were not in his favour, he withdrew Gaza, he insisted, would not be attacked again until he knew that he could take it. For that to happen, though, he needed something big to distract the Turks. Something like an uprising.

Since the beginning of the war, the British had considered that one way they might defeat the Turks would be to harness the power of Arab nationalism.

WMASS DESTRUCTION

THE FIRST NATION TO EMPLOY GAS WAS FRANCE, WHICH FIRED TEAR GAS AT GERMAN TROOPS IN AUGUST 1914. HOWEVER, THE GERMANS WERE THE FIRST TO USE POISONOUS CHLORINE GAS IN APRIL 1915.

THE THIRD BATTLE FOR GAZA IN 1917 WAS TO MARK THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

One of its main proponents, and a key tribal leader in Arabia, was Sharif Hussein. The British approached him, but Hussein made it clear that if he did commit to the Allied cause, he expected Arab independence in return when the Turks were booted out. The British readily agreed and, with Allied aid, Hussein began to build an Arab uprising.

But the Arab forces lacked discipline, and with so many competing tribes and factions, many doubted that the uprising could have any impact all. If it was to work, it needed a leader, so the Arab Bureau in Cairo despatched a 28-year-old intelligence officer and former archaeologist called Thomas Edward Lawrence into Arabia to find one. The man he found was Prince Feisal – the third of Hussein's four sons. Feisal would galvanise the disparate Arab tribes, and Lawrence would lead them into battle.

Lawrence knew the Arabs wouldn't be much of a match for the heavily fortified Turkish positions, so instead he organised them into small mobile detachments. These were then used to mount hit-and-run missions across the desert, attacking poorly defended targets such as the Hejaz railway, between Medina and Damascus.

The archaeologist, it transpired, had a genius for guerrilla warfare.

On 6 July 1917, that genius was to become known to the world when Lawrence captured the strategically vital Port of Aqaba, crossing 600 miles of desert to attack it. It was a stunning victory and Lawrence returned to Cairo to report it to Allenby. Lawrence arrived dressed not in uniform but a traditional Arab dish-dash. While the other staff officers may have laughed at Lawrence, Allenby took him deadly seriously. He rewarded Lawrence and his Arab army with guns and gold. At last, the cautious General had his distraction.

End of an empire

By October 1917, Lawrence's guerrilla war had tipped the balance of power, pinning down about 30,000 Turkish troops. Allenby now felt confident that he could take Gaza. On a moonlit night at the end of the month, his army crept once again across the desert towards the Turkish line, attacking both ends simultaneously – at Gaza on the coast, and Beersheba 27 miles inland. Allenby's plan was simple: distract the enemy at Gaza while using a larger force to seize Beersheba. Then, once that city has fallen, concentrate everything against the objective in the north.

The battles raged all day, but by the night of 31 October, Beersheba was in British hands. The next day, Allenby hit the Turks at Gaza with everything he had, and 24 hours later the city was his. The Third Battle for Gaza was the beginning of the end for the Ottoman Empire. ▶

TIMELINE *The First Global War*

JUNE 1914

Franz Ferdinand, the Archduke of Austria, is assassinated in Sarajevo by the Bosnian-Serb "Black Hand" rebel Gavrilo Princip.

AUGUST 1914

Germany declares war on Russia and France, then invades Belgium as the first stage in the implementation of the Schlieffen Plan. Britain declares war on Germany.

AUGUST 1914

Russia mobilises a massive army but is dealt crushing defeats at the Battles of Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes. Russia loses nearly 300,000 men, killed, wounded or captured.

SEPTEMBER 1914

The First Battle of the Marne is fought between Germany and the Allies. Nearly half a million men are killed. Germany's loss leads to the "Race to the Sea" and the instigation of trench warfare across Europe.

OCTOBER 1914

Germany convinces Turkey to join the Triple Alliance. Desperate to avoid the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, it declares war on Russia.

APRIL 1915

ANZAC forces land at Gallipoli, starting an ill-fated campaign in the Dardanelles. The Allies are evacuated five months later with the loss of 500,000 men, split between the Allies and the Turks.

JULY 1915

The German South West Africa colony (Namibia) is taken by the Allies following 11 months of fighting between the Germans, and South African and Rhodesian troops loyal to the British.

Battle for Africa

It was a German cruiser that lured Britain into a protracted and unnecessary campaign in Africa. Towards the end of 1914, SMS Königsberg had raided Zanzibar and sunk a British cruiser. Hoping to put it out of action, the British decided to strangle all her possible bases, starting with the port of Tanga in present-day Tanzania. The British believed that taking the town would be easy, but the garrison there was commanded by a tactically brilliant 45-year-old General called Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck. The British landings proved costly, and although a beachhead was briefly established, Von Lettow soon sent the British back into the sea.

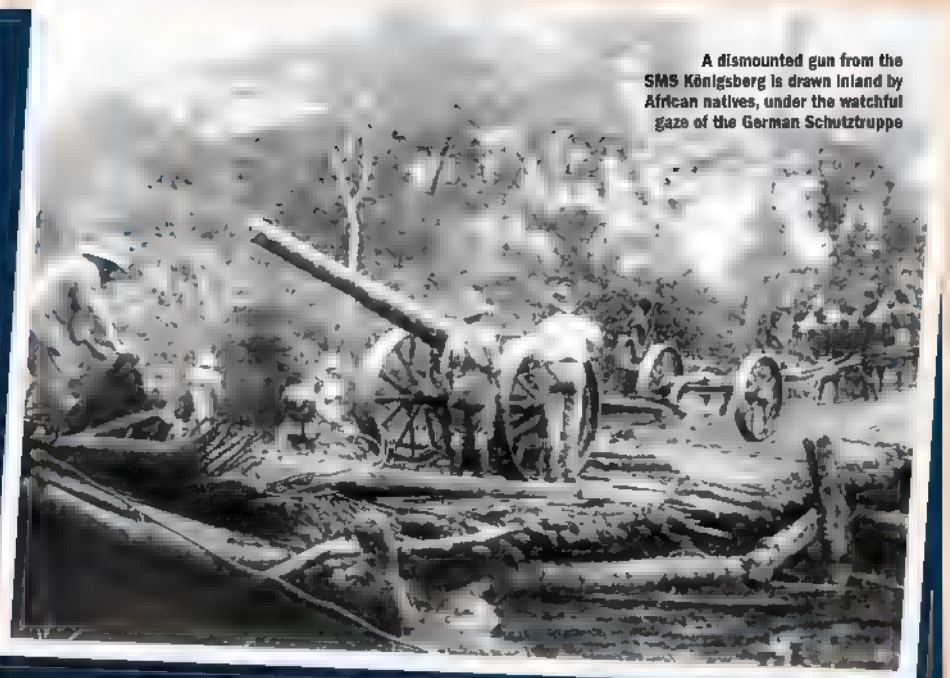
Britain now requested that its colonial ally South Africa send its armies north to sort out the troublesome Von Lettow. By July 1915, the South Africans, having seized the German colony on its western borders in present-day Namibia, duly agreed. It was exactly what Von Lettow had hoped for: he believed that if he could draw the British and her allies into a war in Africa, he could divert manpower and resources away from the Western Front.

The South Africans gathered together an army of 73,000 men under General Jan Smuts and headed north to take on Von Lettow and his pesky force of 14,000. With five times the men and five times the supplies, Smuts should have destroyed his enemy quickly, but he found himself dragged into a long, drawn-out guerrilla campaign, and the further he chased Von Lettow into the African interior, the further his supply lines were strained.

Rain, heat, dust, wild animals and disease all played their part in slowing Smuts' vast army down, while poor intelligence and inadequate maps ensured that his men got killed or lost. All the while, Von Lettow called the shots, playing with Smuts, refusing to engage him in open battle, hitting, running, luring him ever deeper into the continent.

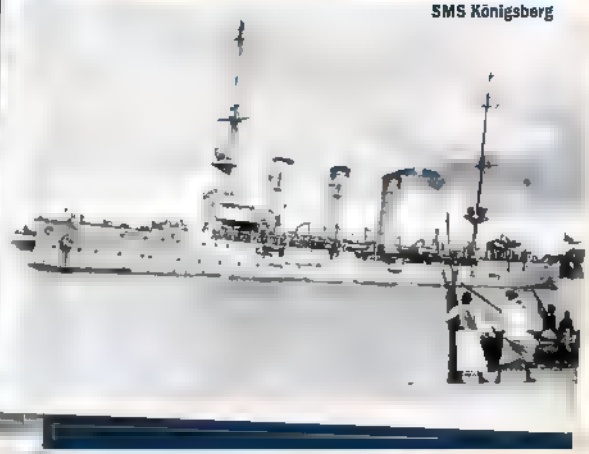
The scale of the operation was huge, as was the cost both in terms of manpower and money. The British recruited over a million black African porters to carry supplies – a fifth of whom died of disease or malnutrition during the three-year chase. Out of 20,000 white South Africans who went, over half were invalided home by the start of 1917, to be replaced by black troops from western Africa.

By the end, the British had turned an entire continent against Von Lettow's tiny force. With never any more than 14,000 men, the wily General had held a force of some 300,000 Allied troops in check, and remained undefeated. Germany may not have won the war, but by tying up vital Allied manpower and resources in Africa for so many years, Von Lettow undoubtedly delayed his country's defeat. The only German commander to successfully invade British imperial territory during the war, he returned home to Berlin in 1919 to a hero's welcome.



A dismounted gun from the SMS Königsberg is drawn inland by African natives, under the watchful gaze of the German Schutztruppe

An Askari company of native soldiers in German East Africa



SMS Königsberg

Bundes Archiv

MAY 1916

The British Grand Fleet meets the Kaiserliche Marine at Jutland. British casualties are high but it ends the German High Seas Fleet's aspirations; Germany instead turns to submarine warfare.

APRIL 1917

Following Germany's campaign of unrestricted submarine attacks, five US merchant ships are sunk in March. The US enters the war a month later.

JULY 1917

The Battle of Passchendaele takes place near Ypres, from July to November. The battle remains a source of controversy, due to location and timing. Casualties number in the many hundreds of thousands.

MARCH 1918

With its armies decimated, and revolution in full swing, the newly formed Bolshevik Government of Russia signs the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, ending the war with Germany.

AUGUST 1918

The Hundred Days Offensive begins with the Battle of Amiens. This is followed by the Second Battle of the Somme, and the Germans retreat to the Hindenburg Line. The campaign results in 2.2 million casualties.

NOVEMBER 1918

With the Central Powers defeated, Germany signs the Armistice in a railway carriage at Compiègne in northern France. Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicates and flees to the Netherlands.

JUNE 1919

The Treaty of Versailles is signed in Paris. Germany is forced to accept full responsibility for starting the war, cede territory to its neighbours and pay reparations.

The extraordinary Mr Zimmermann

Arthur Zimmermann was Germany's State Secretary for Foreign Affairs between 22 November 1916 and 6 August 1917. In just eight months, however, he changed the course of history as much as any one person, becoming one of the most destructive individuals of the 20th Century in the process.

His rise to the top of Germany's foreign service had been meteoric. On his way up, he'd had a hand in fostering the Kaiser's Jihad in the Middle East, formulated plans for an Indian rebellion against the Raj, and supported the Irish uprising against the British. These, though, were mere preludes to his grander plans.

In February 1917, the German Navy lifted its ban on unrestricted submarine warfare. It was a risky policy: sinking US ships might provoke America into the war. And if the Americans joined the Allies, the Kaiser would be doomed.

Zimmermann decided to give the US something bigger to worry about closer to home. His plan was to persuade Mexico to invade America and take back Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. He drafted a telegram outlining his plan to the German ambassador in Mexico, and sent it on what he thought was a secure line. But the British Secret Service intercepted it, and by 1pm on 24 February, US President Woodrow Wilson was reading a copy in the Oval Office.

Many Americans thought it was a hoax. For years, Britain had been pestering them to join the hostilities, and Zimmermann was invited to deny that he'd written it. But he didn't. He told the truth, and his confession helped to persuade Wilson to declare war on Germany.

For an encore, Zimmermann took international mischief-making to new heights. February 1917 also saw the end of the Czar in Russia. The Revolution there had driven the old regime from power, but the country still wasn't out of the war. One ingredient was missing – an anti-war leader who could convince the Russian people it was time to lay down their arms. As luck would have it, Zimmermann had just the chap in mind.

When the Russian uprising had taken place, Lenin was living in exile in Switzerland. The Bolshevik leader had long argued for Russia's exit from the conflict, and was so desperate to get back to Russia and seize power that, when Zimmermann came knocking offering secret financial and military support, he grabbed it with both hands.

In April 1917, Zimmermann organised a train to take Lenin across Germany to St Petersburg, where he galvanised the revolution, organised the Red Guard and, on 6 November 1917, seized power. With America now embroiled in European affairs, and Russia becoming the world's first communist state, the 20th Century's destiny was cast. And all thanks to the extraordinary Mr Zimmermann.

Mary Evans

Imperial Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg meets with the former State Secretary Gottlieb von Jagow and his successor, Undersecretary Arthur Zimmermann

By 11 December, Allenby had also taken Jerusalem. Damascus was his next target, then after that Istanbul. It looked like nothing could stop him, but then Russia became engulfed in revolution, withdrawing from the war and suddenly freeing up 44 German divisions for France. With a huge German offensive in the offing, the War Office recalled 90,000 of Allenby's best men to block it.

Lawrence continued to harry the enemy, but Allenby had to wait almost another year to finish the Turks off. In September 1918, as fresh American troops poured off ships in France to bolster the Western Front, Allenby's forces clambered down the gangplanks of vessels in Alexandria. With his forces restored to him, Allenby blew the sand off his maps and drew a big red circle around Damascus – the Turks' last stronghold.

Allenby attacked on 19 September in a series of assaults known as the Battle of Megiddo – the place known in the Bible as Armageddon. His right flank protected by Lawrence's guerrillas, Allenby sent his cavalry rushing on up the coast. They smashed through the Turkish lines, then swung east in an attempt to surround what was left of them. But the Turks ran, retreating towards Damascus in total chaos, chased by British aircraft that strafed and bombed them all the way. As the British pushed forward, they found the roads congested with blackened corpses. Within two days, the entire Turkish 7th and 8th Armies had been obliterated, and by 1 October Damascus had fallen. The war in Palestine was over.

Around the same time, over in Iraq, General William Marshall – General Maud's replacement – was rushing northwards. The Ottoman Empire was in its death throes and, when it finally croaked, Lloyd George wanted to make sure that the large oil reserves around Mosul were under new ownership. On 29 October, the British routed the Turks one last time at the Battle of Sharqat. The next day, Istanbul issued armistice terms, which the British accepted and then immediately broke by descending on Mosul and seizing the oilfields.

After four centuries of Ottoman rule, the Turks had finally been kicked out of the Middle East. But Prince Feisal and his father were not to get the independence they'd been promised; Britain and France carved the former Ottoman territories up and claimed them as their own. It was a treachery that would trigger an upheaval in the Middle East, the repercussions of which are still being felt to this day.

Lawrence was so ashamed that he turned down a knighthood, and spent the rest of his short, tragic life trying to escape himself. So ashamed was he of the legend of Lawrence that he changed his name several times, re-enlisting in the Army as a Private under one pseudonym, then joining the RAF as someone else. "We asked them to fight," he later said of the whole sorry business, "and all on the basis of a lie."

RUSSIA WAS SO UNPREPARED FOR CONFLICT THAT IT WAS FORCED TO SEND ITS SOLDIERS INTO EARLY BATTLES WITHOUT WEAPONS AND SUPPLIES

MASSED TROOPS
DURING THE WAR, RUSSIA MOBILISED 12 MILLION MEN, MAKING IT THE LARGEST ARMY OF THE CONFLICT. MORE THAN THREE QUARTERS WERE KILLED, WOUNDED OR WENT MISSING.

Extermination in the East

The Kaiser's ambition wasn't the only thing that ensured the Great War was a global one. The catalyst for hostilities had, of course, been the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in June 1914 by Bosnian-Serb nationalists. Franz Ferdinand was heir to the throne of the Hapsburg Empire, and his murder prompted the Austro-Hungarians, with the backing of Germany, to declare war on Serbia, which itself had major alliances. Opportunism and a complex web of treaties then dragged various other countries into the conflict.

The biggest of these was Russia, which was so unprepared for conflict that it would send its soldiers into early battles without weapons, and had to spend so much money playing military catch-up that, not for the last time in its history, it broke its economy in an arms race. ▶

A British tank and troops on the Palestine border at the time of General Allenby's attack

Mary Evans

When it started, the war seemed like a godsend to Czar Nicholas II. By the summer of 1914, his kingdom was wobbling on the edge of civil meltdown. The outbreak of war in early August 1914 ensured, temporarily at least, that militant feelings were replaced with patriotic ones. When conscription orders were issued in Russia's then-capital St Petersburg, more than 95 per cent of conscripts reported willingly for duty. The Russian people were sleepwalking into a war they could neither win nor wanted

RED DAWN
WWI WAS THE CATALYST THAT TRANSFORMED RUSSIA INTO THE WORLD'S FIRST COMMUNIST STATE – A FACT THAT MANY HISTORIANS CITE AS BEING THE MOST IMPORTANT CONSEQUENCE OF THE WAR.

Russian officers inspect their troops prior to the ill-fated Battle of Tannenberg

Russian advance

Russia mobilised millions of troops quickly, catching Germany by surprise. On 17 August 1914, the Russian 1st Army invaded Eastern Prussia, sending a tsunami of refugees running from the Russians with horror stories of Slavic atrocities. The overwhelmed German army fell back 100 miles

But Russia's success was to be short lived. Its army simply wasn't prepared for war – a third of its soldiers weren't even issued with a rifle, while food, bedding and boots had to be scavenged To add to the Russian soldier's woes, Germany assigned two of her most capable Generals to the defence of her eastern border – Paul Von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff. They immediately organised a daring counter attack.

The Russian 2nd Army had moved so fast into German territory that it had effectively isolated itself from the rest of the invasion force The Germans surrounded it near the town of Tannenberg, and pulled the noose tight. After five days of fighting, 78,000 Russians had been killed or wounded, and a further 92,000 captured. A week later, the Russians suffered even heavier losses at the Battle of the Masurian Lakes, losing 170,000 men. From that point on, the war on the Eastern Front would mainly move in one direction – eastward. Albeit murderously slowly.

BY THE END OF THE WAR, BOTH SERBIA AND THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN EMPIRE HAD VANISHED FROM THE MAP

Although Germany had happily put herself at the heart of it, this beef in the east had been called by the Austro-Hungarians and its once-great Hapsburg Empire. But this mish-mash of nations and ethnic minorities was never going to survive a war like this, and as it began to collapse, this fading Imperial force acted like a sink drain, sucking in the nations around it. Its neighbours had either much to win or much to lose by its demise, and sides were quickly chosen

Romania, to Austro-Hungary's east, chose the Allies in exchange for the promise of territorial gains such as Hapsburg-owned Transylvania. Italy, to the south, also sided with the Allies, its Prime Minister, Antonio Salandra, trading his country's neutrality for various chunks of the Hapsburg dominion, including bits of the Dalmatian coast and a few islands. He did so without consulting his parliament, and criminally committed his country to a fight in the Dolomite mountains, where Italy bordered Hapsburg lands – a deadly vertical war, no less, fought on cliffs and in caves and tunnel systems two miles above the sea.

Then there was Bulgaria, which sided with the Central Powers. The price of her loyalty was to be vast swathes of land in Serbia, which Germany and Austro-Hungary planned to invade in order to win control of the Balkans and exact revenge for the assassination of the Archduke. The consequences were to be as harrowing as any of the Great War

On 6 October, the Germans and Austro-Hungarians swept into Serbia from the north. Belgrade, the capital, fell within three days. Bulgaria then invaded from

Russian troops entrenched in a forest at the Battle of Sarikamish, during the winter of 1914-1915

Mary Evans

The War in the Atlantic

With most of the German fleet bottled up in Kiel and Hamburg, it fell to its U-boats to fight the war on the high seas. As early as 22 September 1914, this underwater threat showed its potency when a single U-boat sank three British battleships – HMS Aboukir, HMS Hogue and HMS Cressy – in one day, killing 1,459 British sailors.

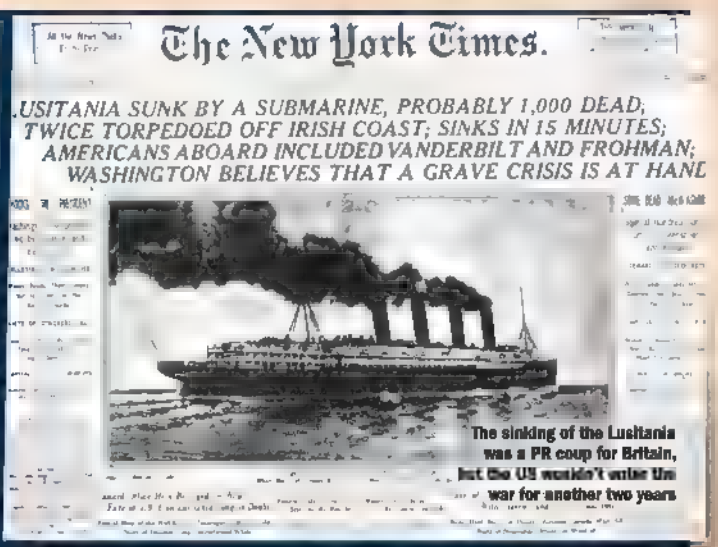
The U-boat's main weapon was surprise: it could sneak up on its target and blow it out of the water completely undetected. When it came to attacking merchant shipping, however, this created a serious legal and diplomatic problem. Under international law, any warship attacking a merchant ship was first required to stop it, board it and inspect its cargo. If that cargo was deemed to be helping the enemy, the attacker was then required to allow the merchant crew to leave their ship safely, before destroying the vessel.

But in early 1915, the Kaiser decided to let the U-boats loose. His troops were getting nowhere against the Allies on land, so the decision was made to choke Britain's supply routes across the Atlantic. On 22 February, Germany declared that it would carry out a campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare – all merchant ships headed to Allied ports would be considered legitimate targets and attacked without warning. Within three months, Germany's submarine fleet had sunk 115 ships. Then, on 7 May 1915, one U-boat attacked the passenger liner SS Lusitania, killing more than 1,200 civilians.

The sinking caused international outrage. The British propaganda machine went into overdrive, targeting American popular opinion and directing much of the outrage towards the Kaiser himself. The PR fallout from the Lusitania's sinking was enough to convince the Germans to return to obeying international law, but it didn't last long. In February 1916, unrestricted submarine warfare returned, and so did the indignation. Fearing they would provoke the US into the war, the Germans again called it off in the spring, but by that time they had sunk a further 212 ships.

When the Germans lifted the ban again for a third time in February 1917, it was to prove disastrous. The 500 ships they sunk in the next two months played a pivotal role in the United States' declaration of war against Germany on 6 April.

By early 1918, the use of sub-hunting airships and seaplanes, extensive mine-laying, and attacking the ports they used on the Belgian coast, meant that the U-boat threat was largely contained. This allowed American troops to be transported safely across the Atlantic to Europe, where their sheer weight of numbers would help tip the balance on the Western Front. By the time the Germans capitulated, 1.4 million American servicemen had made the trip across the Atlantic.


The New York Times.

LUSITANIA SUNK BY A SUBMARINE, PROBABLY 1,000 DEAD; TWICE TORPEDOED OFF IRISH COAST; SINKS IN 15 MINUTES; AMERICANS ABOARD INCLUDED VANDERBILT AND FROHMAN; WASHINGTON BELIEVES THAT A GRAVE CRISIS IS AT HAND

The sinking of the Lusitania was a PR coup for Britain, but the US wouldn't enter the war for another two years

Getty Images

the south-east. The overwhelmed Serbian army fled, along with countless civilians. They headed south-west towards Albania with the murderous Central Powers forces in pursuit. They didn't stop running until they reached the town of Prizren in Kosovo, where the diaspora's leaders decided that their only option was to flee over the harsh mountain range before them - the so-called Cursed Peaks – into Albania, with the idea of regrouping somewhere in safety on a Mediterranean island.

The evacuation turned into another huge death march. It was winter and the mountains were unforgiving. The Serbs – men, women, children, the old and infirm – couldn't turn back. But many couldn't go on either, collapsing in the ice and freezing to death far from home. When the survivors did eventually reach sanctuary in Corfu several months later, around 250,000 Serbians soldiers had perished. To this day, nobody knows what the civilian cost was, although Serbia's death rate was the conflict's highest. Some estimates put it as high as 18 per cent of the population – Britain's, by contrast, was around two per cent.

By the end of the war, both Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire had vanished from maps of Europe, the former incorporated into the new Yugoslavia, the latter broken up into pieces. And they weren't the only countries to be traumatically transformed.

By 1917, the Russian army had lost around three million men. It was war weary, suffering from poor leadership and corruption. There was no longer any belief in its ranks that the war could be won, but still the line held.

It was the home front that was to crack first. On 8 March, angry workers in St Petersburg staged a demonstration, and Nicholas II's typically intolerant response was to be his undoing. As the demonstrators gathered peacefully in Znamenskaya Square, the Czar's soldiers opened fire, killing 50. The massacre so shocked the soldiers who'd perpetrated it that they asked themselves who they were fighting for - the people or the Czar? They decided it was the people. They killed their officers and swept into the streets with the workers. The revolution had begun. By July, the Czar would be dead and, from then on, Russia would be run by the people *for* the people. Not by men of noble birth, but men who came from the fields and from the street; men like Lenin and Trotsky; men like Joseph Stalin.

BENEATH THE WAVES
SUBMARINES PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE DURING WWI: GERMAN U-BOATS SANK 6,596 SHIPS, AND THEIR INDISCRIMINATE ATTACKS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR BRINGING THE US INTO THE WAR.

THE GREAT BEAR ON HORSEBACK
Russian cavalry uniforms of WWI, from left: a border guard officer, a trooper, a cavalry officer, a hussar in Grodno Lifeguard regiment summer uniform, and an Uhlan lancer of the Emperor's Lifeguard regiment.

Leaders of Men

WWI GERMAN COMMANDERS

From the "Blood-Miller of Verdun" to the "Lion of Africa", we remember some of Germany's greatest military masterminds

Following the unification of Germany in 1871, the scene was set for the powers in Central Europe to begin flexing their collective muscles. With imperial aspirations running rampant, events in the Balkans in 1914 rapidly escalated into a full-blown conflict between Germany/Austro-Hungary and the Allies of Britain, France and Russia. In the ensuing war, Germany could call upon a rich vein of military experience: men who had fought for Prussia and Austria, and who could trace their lineage back through distinguished military backgrounds across the various Germanic states

There were many notable commanders of German forces during the First World War, many of whom had come from nobility. Among the Dukes, Archdukes, Barons and Counts, the Germans also fielded several members of royal families: Prince Heinrich of Prussia served in the Kaiserliche Marine but was limited during the war to an appointment as Inspector-General of the Navy; the 69-year-old Prince Leopold of Bavaria commanded the German Ninth Army on the Eastern Front; Crown Prince Rupprecht was considered a fine tactical leader, and his Sixth Army inflicted heavy casualties on the French forces at Lorraine; while Crown Prince Wilhelm – son of Kaiser Wilhelm II – led the Fifth Army at Verdun, appointed to the task by Chief of Staff Erich von Falkenhayn (also featured here).

1840 1850 1860 1870 1880 18

KARL VON BÜLOW

STALWART OF THE SECOND ARMY

1846-1921

According to the tradition of his Prussian family, Karl von Bülow entered the military as a young man. By the time the First World War started, he was something of a veteran, having seen action in both the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian Wars. In 1914, he was given command of the German Second Army that would lead the attack into Belgium in accordance with the Schlieffen Plan. His forces enjoyed great success, capturing the fortress of Namur and later defeating Charles Lanrezac's Fifth Army at the Battle of Charleroi

However, von Bülow refused to follow up on these successes at Marne unless supported by Alexander von Kluck's First Army, which was 50km west and heading for Paris. Von Bülow ordered von Kluck to turn towards him, resulting in the First Army exposing its flanks to Allied attack at the Battle of the Marne. Fearing a French breakthrough, von Bülow ordered a withdrawal and is generally held responsible for the German defeat at Marne. Despite this, he was promoted to Field Marshal, but a heart attack in 1915 prevented him taking further action in the war.

DID YOU KNOW?

Von Bülow's heart attack forced him to retire from service in 1916, but he departed as one of the most decorated commanders in German military history.

REMUS VON WOYRSCH

GERMAN HERO OF THE EASTERN FRONT

1847-1920

Remus von Woyrsch's career with the Prussian Army had already ended by 1914, but he was recalled from retirement when the First World War broke out, aged 68. Born of minor nobility, he had served in both the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian Wars, receiving the Iron Cross for his actions in the latter. His experience with infantry resulted in him being placed in command of the Silesian Landwehr Corps on the Eastern Front. Operating alongside the Austro-Hungarian First Army, he served with distinction at the Battle of Rava-Ruska, covering the army's retreat under Victor Dankl, at the cost of 8,000 of his own men. He was duly appointed head of "Army Group Woyrsch" in Silesia, which was followed by successes at the battles of Thorn and Sienno, plus a victory against Alexei Evert's forces during the Brusilov Offensive of 1916.

After the war, he retired for a second and final time, before dying in 1920.

DID YOU KNOW?

As well as being an esteemed military commander, von Woyrsch was a member of the Prussian House of Lords between 1908 and 1918.

FELIX GRAF VON BOTHMER

NEMESIS OF THE RUSSIANS

1852-1937

Born into Bavarian nobility, Count Felix Graf von Bothmer spent 40 years in the military, serving with Bavarian and Prussian forces, largely on the general staff. He was made Lieutenant General in 1905 and General of the Infantry in 1910, and with the outbreak of war was appointed commander of the Sixth Bavarian Reserve Division at Ypres. Four months later, he was placed in charge of II Reserve Corps in Galicia (modern-day western Ukraine), before taking control of the "Südarmee", or South Army, in 1915 – a mixture of German, Austrian, Hungarian and Turkish troops on the Eastern Front.

Von Bothmer enjoyed some success against the numerically superior Russians, winning the Battle of Zwinin, and most notably during the Brusilov Offensive of 1916 – a massive assault by the Russian Imperial Army that saw von Bothmer's line pushed back but unbroken. In 1917, his forces repelled the Kerensky Offensive, routing the demoralised Russians. During his time on the Eastern Front, he was awarded the Pour le Mérite with Oak Leaves and the Grand Cross of the Bavarian Military Order of Max Joseph. However, his final actions were to oversee the retreat of the 19th Army in Lorraine, and the eventual demobilisation of the Bavarian Army.

DID YOU KNOW?

Such was the admiration for von Bothmer that when he died in 1937, Adolf Hitler's government gave him a state funeral – against the wishes of von Bothmer's family.

90 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940

ERICH VON FALKENHAYN

"THE BLOOD-MILLER OF VERDUN"

1861-1922

Another native of Prussia, von Falkenhayn was born in Burg Belchau (in the north of modern-day Poland) and, in accordance with the region's military tradition, duly joined the army. He spent seven years as a military instructor in China during the Boxer Rebellion, before being posted back to various posts in Germany. In 1913, he was promoted to Prussian Minister of War and was one of the key architects of the First World War, following the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand.

As Chief of the General Staff of the German Army, he was responsible for the "Race to the Sea", where German and Allied troops tried to outflank one another but ended up entrenched along a front extending from Switzerland to the North Sea. In an attempt to "bleed France white", he organised the nine-month attritional Battle of Verdun. But he underestimated French resolve and casualties on both sides were colossal, earning him the nickname "the Blood-Miller of Verdun". With the battle indecisive and the losses huge, von Falkenhayn was replaced as Chief of Staff by Paul von Hindenburg.

DID YOU KNOW?

After the war, von Falkenhayn wrote several books and opined that Germany's declarations of war had been "justifiable but over-hasty".

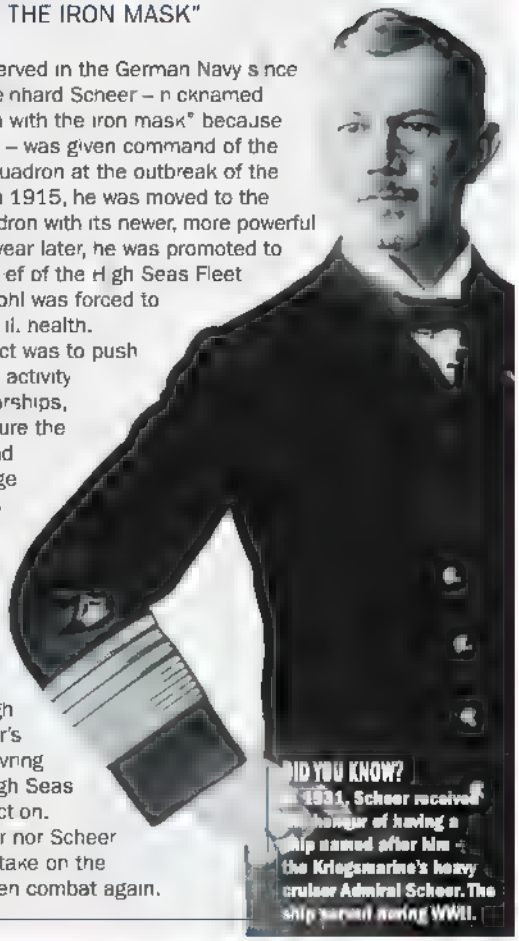
REINHARD SCHEER

"THE MAN WITH THE IRON MASK"

1863-1928

Having served in the German Navy since 1879, Reinhard Scheer – nicknamed "the man with the iron mask" because of his stern looks – was given command of the Second Battle Squadron at the outbreak of the First World War. In 1915, he was moved to the Third Battle Squadron with its newer, more powerful dreadnoughts. A year later, he was promoted to Commander-in-Chief of the High Seas Fleet when Hugo von Pohl was forced to step down due to ill health.

Scheer's first act was to push for greater U-boat activity against British warships, in an attempt to lure the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet out to engage with the Germans. The two navies finally clashed at the Battle of Jutland, which was seen as a minor tactical victory for the Germans, although it was only Scheer's strategic manoeuvring that saved the High Seas Fleet from destruction. Neither the Kaiser nor Scheer felt the desire to take on the Grand Fleet in open combat again.



DID YOU KNOW?

In 1931, Scheer received the honour of having a ship named after him – the Kriegsmarine's heavy cruiser Admiral Scheer. The ship served during WWII.

ERICH LUDENDORFF

ONCE THE MOST POWERFUL MAN IN GERMANY

1865-1937

Descended from Pomeranian merchants, Erich Ludendorff was a gifted student who graduated from Cadet School at the top of his class. In 1885, he was made Lieutenant of the 57th Infantry Regiment, before joining various other units, and was frequently commended for his service. In 1894, he was appointed to the German General Staff, rising to the rank of Senior Staff Officer.

With the outbreak of war, Ludendorff was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff to the Second Army, where he helped secure a victory over the Belgian forts at Liège, earning himself the Pour le Mérite medal for gallantry. He was then seconded to the Eighth Army on the Eastern Front, where he was instrumental in Paul von Hindenburg's success against the Russians. In 1916, Ludendorff assumed the title First Generalquartiermeister, and is regarded as being the most powerful man in Germany at that time. However, his planned offensives in the west overstretched the German Army, leading to huge Allied advances.

After the armistice, he wrote several essays on the war and is largely responsible for the "stab in the back" theory that suggests the German military was betrayed by the Kaiser's poor leadership and undermined by sinister political forces.

DID YOU KNOW?

Following the war, Ludendorff launched a series of attacks on his former superior Paul von Hindenburg, claiming that he hadn't acted in a "nationalistic, soldier-like fashion".

1905 1910 1915 1920 1925 1930 193

ALBRECHT, DUKE OF WÜRTTEMBERG

NOBLE WARRIOR

1865-1939

Another member of German nobility, Albrecht von Württemberg was the eldest son of Duke Philipp and his wife, the Archduchess Maria Theresa. At the outbreak of war, Albrecht was in command of the German Fourth Army and saw action in the Battle of the Ardennes, where the French defenders were heavily defeated. However, his forces would be driven back at the Battle of the Marne, which would then result in a stalemate and the entrenching "Race to the Sea". Albrecht and his men were then transferred to Flanders, where they saw action in the Battle of the Yser and the Second Battle of Ypres. The latter is notable for the first large-scale use of gas on the battlefield.

During the army-command reorganisation of 1915, Albrecht was promoted to Field Marshal and given control of a newly formed "Army Group Albrecht". His force was posted to the southern sector of the Western Front, where he remained until the armistice. Following the cessation of hostilities, the German revolutions meant that he lost his royal inheritance to the Kingdom of Württemberg.

DID YOU KNOW?

Albrecht, Duke of Württemberg is a distant relative of both Queen Elizabeth II and London Mayor Boris Johnson.

LOTHAR VON ARNAULD DE LA PERIÈRE

THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SUBMARINE CAPTAIN EVER

1888-1941

Although he only had a handful of men under his command, our list wouldn't be complete without the number-one U-boat ace, Lothar von Arnauld de la Perière. Born in Posen (Poznán in modern-day Poland) and a descendant of French nobility, he was educated at the cadet schools of Wahlstatt and Gross-Lichterfelde. Aged 17, he entered the Kaiserliche Marine – the German Imperial Navy – with whom he served on a series of battleships, and also as Torpedo Officer on a light cruiser.

When war broke out, von Arnauld de la Perière was transferred to the Navy's airship division, and in 1915 he moved to U-boats, where he was given command of U-35. Over the next three years, he made 14 voyages and sank more than 190 ships. After transferring to U-139 in 1918, he sank a further five vessels, bringing his tally to nearly half a million tons. However, he always acted according to the "prize rules", allowing ships' crews to board lifeboats and giving them directions to the nearest port before torpedoing the vessel. He received numerous medals, including the Austrian Order of Leopold, the Iron Cross and the Pour le Mérite, and his record number of tonnage makes him the most successful submarine commander of all time.

DID YOU KNOW?

Von Arnauld de la Perière also served his country in the Second World War, but he died in 1941 when the plane in which he was travelling crashed on take-off.

PAUL VON LETTOW-VORBECK

THE "LION OF AFRICA"

1890-1964

The son of a minor Pomeranian noble, Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck attended cadet school in Potsdam and Berlin-Lichterfelde before being commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Imperial Army. He served in China as part of the Allied forces sent to help quell the Boxer Rebellion, and it was here that he got his first taste of guerrilla warfare. In the decade prior to the war, he was posted to German South-West Africa and modern-day Cameroon, before being moved to German East Africa, where he was put in control of Imperial forces plus a dozen companies of native Askari troops.

During the war, von Lettow-Vorbeck harried British colonies in Rhodesia and Kenya in a series of guerrilla raids, often outnumbered by as much as 8:1. His men were often forced to live off the land, resupplying at ammunition dumps, and von Lettow-Vorbeck only surrendered when news of the armistice reached him. He returned home a hero but would end up destitute, supported by a pension paid for by former rivals from Africa and Britain.

DID YOU KNOW?

Von Lettow-Vorbeck has the accolade of being the only German commander to successfully invade Imperial British soil during the First World War.

35 1940 1945 1950 1955 1960 1965

PAUL VON HINDENBURG

THE "SAVIOUR OF EAST PRUSSIA"

1847-1934

At the outbreak of WWI, Paul von Hindenburg was retired, having served with the Prussian Army during the Franco-Prussian War, with whom he attained the rank of General. On his recall, aged 66, he was sent to the Eastern Front as commander of East Prussia, and immediately scored a huge victory at the Battle of Tannenberg. Although outnumbered almost 2:1, von Hindenburg's Eighth Army practically destroyed Russia's Second Army. This was followed up by the Battle of the Masurian Lakes, which drove the Russians out of German territory with huge losses.

Von Hindenburg was hailed as the "Saviour of East Prussia" and promoted to Field Marshal, then to Army Chief of Staff. During this time, thanks largely to the direction of Erich Ludendorff, he managed to stem the Allied advance in the west, defeat Romania and force Russia out of the war, securing his place as a national hero. Von Hindenburg retired again in 1919, but he remained in office and was elected President of the Weimar Republic in 1925.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Hindenburg zeppelin that was famously destroyed by fire in 1937 was named after Paul von Hindenburg.

British troops go "over the top" during the Battle of the Somme. For months on end, they faced the fear that this breath could be their last

Great Battles

THE SOMME

First World War: To many, the Allies' Somme offensive represents the futility of attritional warfare, with 615,000 casualties incurred for an advance of just eight miles. To others, it was a harsh lesson, necessary for the tactical improvements that led to an Allied victory in 1918

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME – the climactic, five-month-long Anglo-French offensive on the Western Front in 1916 – remains the most controversial battle of the Great War, and perhaps of any conflict in history. Daily gains, measured merely in metres, were bought by the sacrifice of many thousands of lives. Indeed, the calamitous British casualties incurred on the offensive's opening day, 1 July, have seared themselves into the British national psyche. However, some see the battle as a triumph of the ordinary British soldier's endurance and perseverance, during which vital offensive tactical skills were honed – a "learning curve" that made the eventual Allied victory in 1918 possible.

While popular perception of the Battle of the Somme focuses primarily on the events of 1 July, the offensive was actually a protracted, multi-national campaign – lasting a total of 141 days – that witnessed 12 distinctive British subsidiary battles alone.

SOME SEE THE BATTLE AS A TRIUMPH OF THE ORDINARY BRITISH SOLDIER'S ENDURANCE AND PERSEVERANCE

During December 1915, the Allies agreed their overarching strategy for the forthcoming 1916 campaign. Britain and France agreed to mount a combined offensive that summer on the Western Front, timed to coincide with further attacks against the Central Powers on the Italian and Eastern Fronts. At this time, General Douglas Haig became Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front.

In February 1916, the British and French decided to mount their joint offensive in the Somme valley in northern France, along which the dividing line between their respective armies ran. Allied planning for this had scarcely begun when the Germans initiated their own offensive against Verdun on 21 February. The increasing French commitment to defending the Verdun salient led to the British assuming a larger proportion of the burden of executing the Somme offensive. The ongoing struggle at Verdun also led the strategic purpose behind the Somme offensive to evolve from one of inflicting a decisive defeat on the Germans to one of drawing enemy forces away from the salient. ▶

The facts

WHO A coalition of the British Third and Fourth Armies, and the French Sixth Army, attacking the German Second Army.

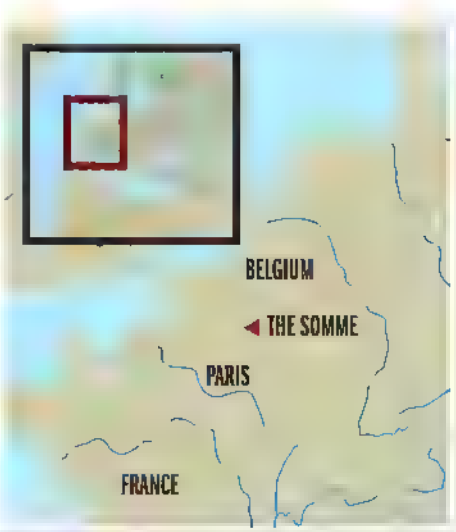
WHAT After bombarding the well-fortified German positions, the Allies slowly ground their way into the enemy lines.

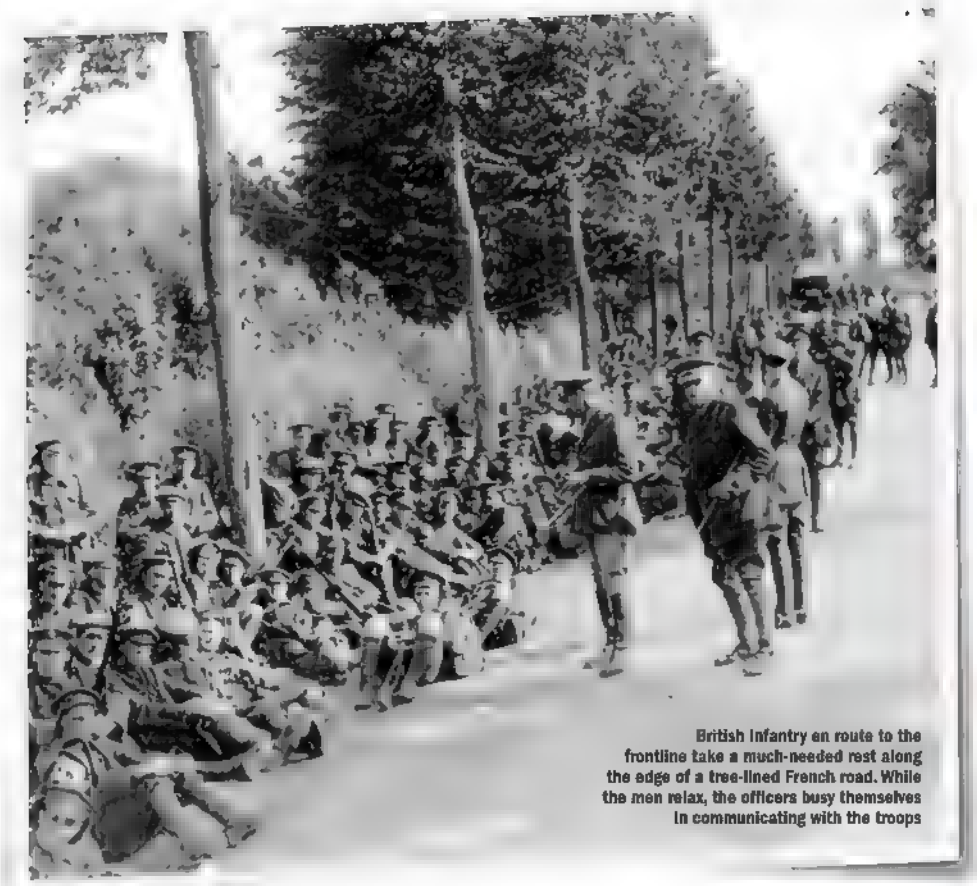
WHERE On the Western Front in France, between the Somme and Ancre Rivers.

WHEN 1 July-18 November 1916.

WHY The war had reached a deadlock. With the Germans encamped on Allied soil, the British and French needed to regain the offensive, while at the same time easing the pressure on Russia and the French forces at Verdun.

OUTCOME Despite both sides suffering massive casualties (especially on the first day of the battle), very little was gained – at least at first. Eventually, though, German losses forced them back to the Hindenburg Line.





British infantry en route to the frontline take a much-needed rest along the edge of a tree-lined French road. While the men relax, the officers busy themselves in communicating with the troops

Mary Evans

BRITISH "TOMMY"

The ordinary British rifleman, or "Tommy", went "over the top" on 1 July 1916 carrying a mass of kit and equipment. Over his shoulder was slung a 7.69mm Lee Enfield rifle with bayonet. He carried 100 rounds of ammunition in his webbing belts and pouches, while strung around his neck was a bag containing his gas mask and cape. On his back, he carried a small day-sack, which contained a canteen of water, two days' rations, a shaving kit, clean socks and any small personal items, such as photographs of his loved-ones.

Haig, however, continued to believe that the offensive could achieve a decisive breakthrough of the German lines. His conception of what was feasible remained at odds with that of Lieutenant-General Henry Rawlinson, commander of Fourth Army, who was responsible for executing the Somme offensive. Rawlinson preferred a "bite and hold" approach, where a sequenced series of short mini-offensives would each secure modest territorial gains while withstanding the inevitable local German counter-attacks. An aggregation of these modest victories would eventually deliver a decisive penetration of the enemy trench system.

FOR SEVEN DAYS, THE BOMBARDMENT CONTINUED, RAINING 1.5 MILLION SHELLS DOWN ON THE ENEMY

The battlefield of this future offensive was located in the valley of the River Somme, between the towns of Albert and Bray in the west, and Bapaume and Peronne in the east. The River Somme flowed in from the south-east, heading due north to Peronne, then north-west to Cléry. The river then wound its way west through Bray. The frontline ran broadly north–south to the east of Bray and Albert, with the Allied positions to the west. At the start of the offensive, the boundary between the British and French forces ran from the frontline at Mancourt down to Bray on the River Somme, before following the river west into the rear areas.

The Germans, positioned to the north and east, tended to hold the high ground, providing them with good observation of the Allied lines. The Germans had held this sector with little disturbance since late 1914, and therefore their defences had been transformed into an elaborate trench system that stretched deep into their own lines. The first German trench system, to the immediate east of no man's land, contained many deep-dug bunkers that proved resistant to even intense bombardment. Behind this, one to three miles further back, they had constructed a second defensive line that ran east of Serre to Pozières, then east of Montauban down to the Somme. A third line was also under construction, positioned two miles behind the second one, and covered the villages of Warlencourt, Pys and Flers.

Spotting missions

The preliminaries to the Battle of the Somme commenced on 24 June 1916. That day, the 1,437 British artillery pieces assembled for the offensive opened fire on the German positions; to the south, the French bombardment also commenced. For seven days, the preliminary bombardment continued, raining 1.5 million shells down on the enemy along an 18-mile sector, in what was then the largest British fire-plan delivered in the history of warfare. While this bombardment unfolded, British tunnelling companies dug 17 mines under the principal German bunkers, while, in the skies above, Allied aircraft – enjoying temporary air superiority – provided spotting missions for the guns. The British expected that this overwhelming artillery bombardment would kill most of the defending German troops, destroy much of their equipment and obliterate their barbed-wire obstacles; the assaulting British infantry would therefore face only light enemy resistance as they advanced swiftly through the entire enemy trench system.

Events on 1 July proved how wrong these expectations had been. Despite the impressive total number of rounds delivered, the British bombardment was relatively ineffective. Some 960 of the British guns were field pieces that had fired relatively light shrapnel rounds. These could be devastating against enemy troops caught in open trenches, but inflicted little damage on troops sheltering in the deep, well-fortified dugouts that the Germans had constructed within their trench system. Another key problem was that fuses in the British shells

British soldiers use Morse code [illegible] signal exchange during the [illegible] of the Somme, July 1916

OPPOSING FORCES

Allied (estimated)

British and Commonwealth:

Troops:	800,000
French troops:	250,000
Total:	750,000

Central Powers (estimated)

Total:	400,000

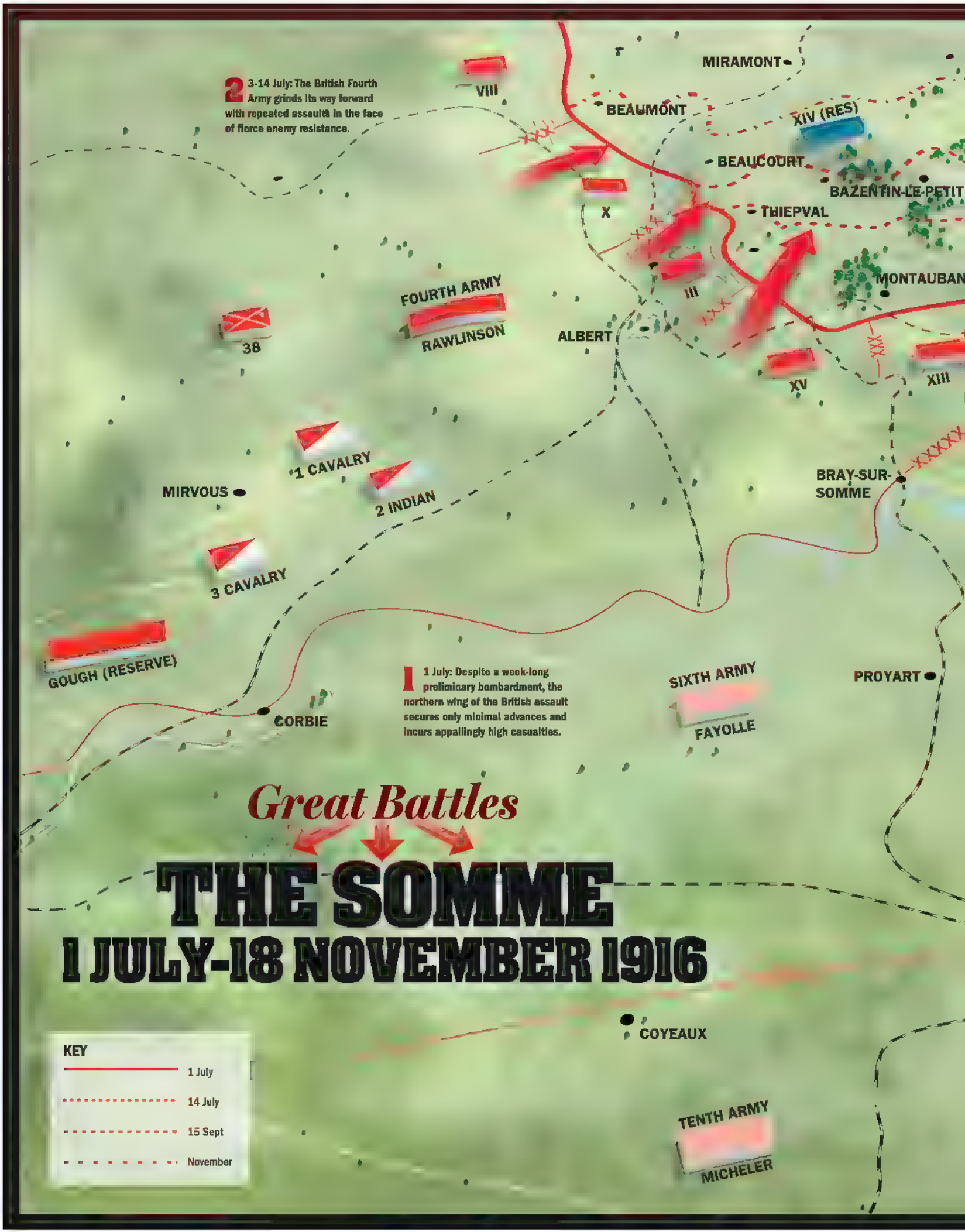
had been manufactured hastily by inexperienced workers; it's estimated that as many as a third of the rounds delivered by the British bombardment failed to explode

The offensive was due to commence on 29 June but, due to difficult weather conditions, was postponed until 1 July. This first phase, the Battle of Albert, lasted until 13 July, but popular perception is dominated by events on 1 July. That day, the 11 divisions of Rawlinson's Fourth Army, plus two divisions of Third Army led by Lieutenant-General Edmund Allenby, which was located on the northern flank, went "over the top". Further south, 11 divisions from General Marie Fayolle's French Sixth Army joined the assault. At 7:28am, the Allies detonated most of the underground mines, devastating the key enemy strongpoints. Then, at 7:30am, as the artillery shifted to engage targets deeper within the German lines, thousands of British assault infantry climbed out of their trenches. In order to maintain command and control, the assaulting troops advanced, as they'd been trained to, in close order. However, the advancing soldiers were stalled by a maze of still-standing barbed-wire obstacles, and met by a hail of devastating enemy small-arms, machine-gun and artillery fire, which cut them down in droves.

Horrendous casualties

North of the Albert–Baupaume road, the British attack was a dismal failure, with the assault troops suffering horrendous casualties and managing to get a foothold in the initial enemy trenches in just a few places. In the abortive attack on Beaumont Hamel, for example,

British heavy artillery pieces, such as this gun, proved devastating against even deep and well-fortified German bunkers. Unfortunately, most British guns were of the lighter, field-piece type

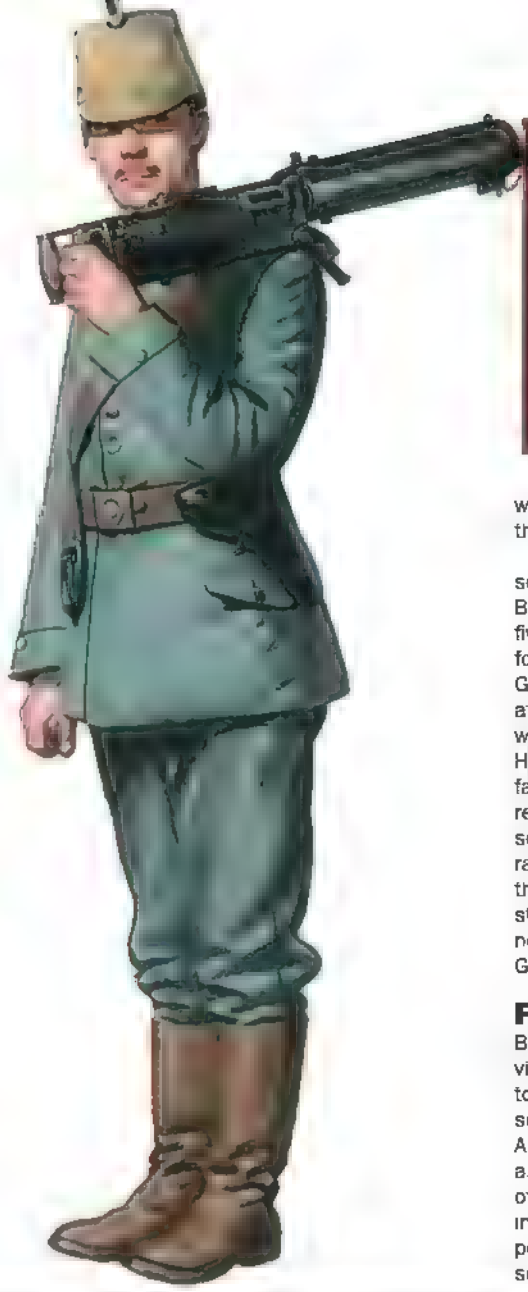

2 3-14 July: The British Fourth Army grinds its way forward with repeated assaults in the face of fierce enemy resistance.
MIRAMONT
VIII
BEAUMONT
XIV (RES)
BEAUCOURT
BAZENTIN-LE-PETIT
X
THIEPVAL
III
MONTAUBAN
FOURTH ARMY
RAWLINSON
38
ALBERT
XV
XIII
1 CAVALRY
2 INDIAN
MIRVOUS
BRAY-SUR-SOMME
3 CAVALRY
GOUGH (RESERVE)
1 1 July: Despite a week-long preliminary bombardment, the northern wing of the British assault secures only minimal advances and incurs appallingly high casualties.
SIXTH ARMY
FAYOLLE
PROYART
CORBIE
Great Battles
THE SOMME
1 JULY-18 NOVEMBER 1916
COYEAUX
TENTH ARMY
MICHELER
KEY
1 July
14 July
15 Sept
November

LE TRANSLOY
LE SARS
MARTINPUICH
FLERS
GINCHY
MORVAL
COMBLES
HARDECOURT
RANCOURT
CLERY-SUR-SOMME
XX CORPS
COMBLES
FLAUCOURT
BARLEUX
I COLONIAL
121 DIV
FOUCAUCOURT
XXXV
FRESNES
ABRAINCOURT
11 DIV
CHAULNES
ROSIERES
XXX CORPS
XVI CORPS
HATTENCOURT
PÉRONNE
BEAUVOIS
ATHIES
HEUDICOURT
SECOND ARMY
VON BELOW
LONGAVESNES
4 15 July-15 September: Grinding British assaults make inroads into the German positions to secure better jumping-off positions for a renewed general offensive.
5 15 September-18 November: Renewed British attacks drive the Germans back to, and in places beyond, their reserve trench line before the offensive peters out with the onset of winter.
3 1-14 July: The initial French offensive in the south makes better progress than the British one in the north, and within a fortnight has secured a maximum advance of six miles across a nine-mile-wide frontage.

the 1st Newfoundland Regiment suffered 90 per cent casualties. The only notable British successes that day were the capture of Mametz and Montauban along the southern flank. Further south, the French – facing a somewhat weaker defensive position and with a more effective preliminary artillery bombardment – secured much greater success. For the cost of around 7,000 casualties, they advanced a mile deep into enemy lines, managing to capture all of their first-day objectives. The day for the British, however, had been disastrous: they suffered no fewer than 57,470 casualties, including 19,240 men killed. Some 32 battalions – including 20 "Pals" battalions – lost over 500 casualties on this first, bloody day of the Somme offensive. ("Pals" battalions were men who had been allowed to enlist together, on the understanding that they would serve alongside their friends, neighbours and work colleagues.)

FOURTH ARMY DROVE FORWARD PAINFULLY SLOWLY AGAINST FIERCE ENEMY RESISTANCE

In the following 48 hours, the British reorganised while Lieutenant-General Hubert Gough's Reserve Army took over the northern part of the British sector. Over the ensuing ten days, Fourth Army undertook 46 assaults, driving forwards painfully slowly against fierce enemy resistance, to capture Mametz Wood. By 13 July, the British had advanced two and a half miles across a nine-mile frontage. Meanwhile, the French to the south continued to make good progress, securing a maximum advance of six miles into the enemy positions across a ten-mile frontage. The combined Allied offensive had inflicted severe casualties on the Germans, and it was only the rapid arrival of seven fresh divisions that kept the German line from breaking.



GERMAN SOLDIER

Prior the First World War, German troops all wore the distinctive regalia of their respective state and regiment. There were dozens of different uniforms, all of varying colours and emblazoned with myriad commemorative belt buckles, badges, armbands and insignia. In order to simplify the fitting and resupplying of its troops, in 1910 the German military introduced the standardised Feldgrau ("field grey") uniform, which featured coloured piping representing each regiment. This was then tweaked in 1915 and again in 1917.

Next, just before dawn on 14 July, the second phase of the Allied offensive – the Battle for Bazentin Ridge – began. After a brief five-minute bombardment fired by 950 guns, four British divisions attacked the second German line between Pozières and Ginchy. The attack proved successful and left the British with footholds in Delville Wood and, temporarily, High Wood, which had been taken in the face of intense enemy fire by two cavalry regiments. The ensuing struggle to actually secure Delville Wood and High Wood would rage until September. On 19 July, meanwhile, the Germans reorganised their command structure: General von Below took over the newly arrived First Army, while General Max von Gallwitz assumed command of Second Army

Fighting continues

British offensive attention now switched to the vital Pozières Ridge, from where they hoped to attack, intending to "roll up" the German second line from the south. Troops from I ANZAC Corps, part of Gough's Reserve Army, assaulted Pozières village on the night/morning of 22/23 July. During the ensuing seven weeks, in an attempt to outflank the potent German positions at Thiepval, the ANZACs fought a bitter series of actions that enabled them to advance

This photograph, taken from an Allied aircraft, shows French infantry advancing across a heavily cratered landscape behind a smokescreen.

to the fringes of the German strongpoint of Mouquet Farm; these actions cost the Corps around 23,000 casualties. Eventually, troops from I Canadian Corps captured the farm on 27 September. Further south, during August and early September, Rawlinson's Fourth Army continued to batter its way against the German positions in and around Guillemont and Ginchy, locations that did not fall until early September. The capture of these hamlets finally left the British forces deployed in a coherent seven-mile line from Mouquet Farm down to Combles, where the French sector began.

The British forces had finally achieved the essential pre-conditions for a larger scale offensive, which would yet again seek to secure decisive success. This coherent line, however, had been reached only through a terrible expenditure of soldiers' lives; for gains of less than a mile, the British had suffered some 82,000 casualties.

Barbed-wire obstacles

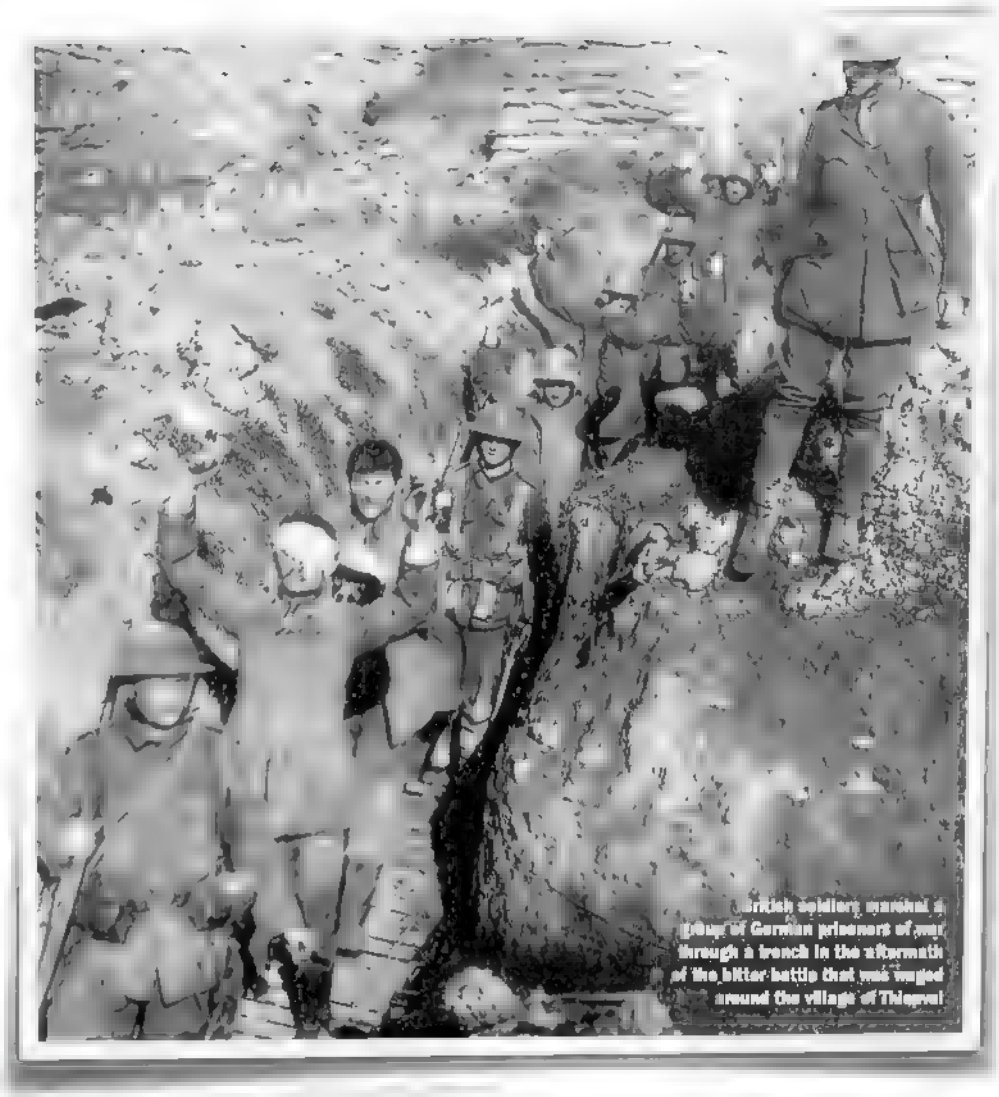
Subsequently, nine divisions from Fourth Army and two Canadian divisions from the Reserve Army initiated the Battle of Flers-Courcelette on 15 September. This operation is best known for the appearance of the tank in warfare; 29 of the vehicles lumbered across the battlefield, breaking down barbed-wire obstacles and providing mobile direct fire support for the infantry. The operation secured some success, with advances of up to two miles deep into enemy positions across a five-mile front, which captured parts of the German reserve trench line. However, the German positions around the Quadrilateral redoubt, east of Ginchy, and at Guedecourt near Thiepval, held firm, and it was not until 25 September that British assaults were finally able to capture these locations.

Next, on 26 September, Gough's Reserve Army – now renamed Fifth Army – launched a major attack against the remaining part of the formidable German enclave at Thiepval. British troops captured the hamlet as well as the nearby Mouquet Farm. Throughout October and into early November, Gough's

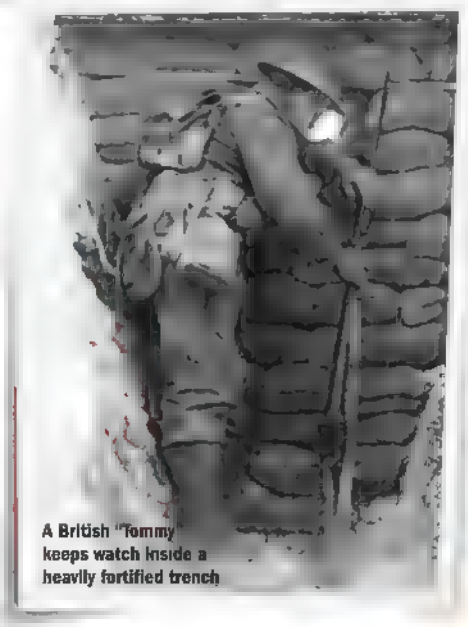
WITH WINTER FAST APPROACHING AND HIS FORCES EXHAUSTED, HAIG SUSPENDED OPERATIONS

forces fought numerous bitter actions to secure the important terrain of the Ancre Heights – including Regina Trench – most of which was captured on 11 November.

Meanwhile, Haig still hoped that a decisive breakthrough could be achieved, and, on 1 October, Fourth Army launched attacks against the German Transloy trench line, which was located between Le Transloy and Le Sars on the Albert–Baupaume main road. Despite appalling weather conditions that turned the ground to a quagmire, Fourth Army's units pressed their attacks vigorously, eventually capturing Le Sars on 7 November; in the aftermath of an abortive attack on Butte de Warlencourt on 5 November, however, Fourth Army operations eventually petered out.



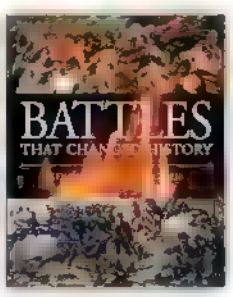
British soldiers marshal a group of German prisoners of war through a trench in the aftermath of the bitter battle that was waged around the village of Thiepval



A British 'Tommy' keeps watch inside a heavily fortified trench

During 13-18 November, the last subsidiary operation of the Somme offensive, the Battle of the Ancre, was played out. During this, the 51st (Highland) Division captured the village of Beaumont Hamel – one of the original objectives of 1 July – while the 4th Canadian Division secured the remainder of Regina Trench. With winter fast approaching, and his forces exhausted, Haig suspended operations.

By the end of the offensive on 18 November 1916, the British had secured an advance of two to eight miles across a frontage of 11 miles, making a total gain of approximately 64 square miles. The French had advanced one to six miles deep into the German lines across the same frontage. The human price of this "victory" was appalling, with around 432,000 British and Commonwealth, and some 200,000 French combat casualties alone; the Germans, by contrast, are estimated to have suffered in the region of 230,000 combat losses. Irrespective of the controversy that still follows such slaughter, the Somme offensive stands out as a testimony to the sheer endurance of ordinary frontline British and Commonwealth, French and German soldiers, who, despite the cold, wet, hunger and terror of ever-present mortal danger, did their duty and fought through one of the darkest periods in the history of warfare.



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TRIGGER POINT

THE START OF THE 2ND SINO-JAPANESE WAR

Opium, torture and imperialist aspirations all played their part in instigating the second of two conflicts between China and their neighbours Japan. Steve Jarratt recounts the story of a war that killed millions and still resonates to this day

FOR CENTURIES, CHINA AND JAPAN have shared many similar facets – architecture and art, religions and customs, philosophies and laws. And for generations, they've been close trading partners – even today, despite national tensions, the two-way commerce between them is the largest of any trading countries.

But their civilisations began to take divergent paths following the Meiji restoration of Japan in the late 1860s. During his expeditions to the country, US Commodore Matthew C Perry forced Japan to end two centuries of isolationist policies and open up to trade with the West. This signalled the end of the shogunate system of feudal control, in favour of a central government entitled Meiji or "enlightened rule".

The country began a series of reforms, driving industrialisation with technologies imported from the West, and instilling in its people a strong work ethic, resulting in a period of rapid growth. Japan also began the process of militarisation in order to fulfil its new-found imperialist aspirations, creating a national army and a modern fleet modelled on Britain's Navy.

Conversely, under the strict moral guidelines of Confucianism, China remained a largely agrarian state that frowned upon competition and profit making. Its infrastructure and military would remain largely unchanged for decades to come.

BRITISH WARSHIPS LAID WASTE TO SOUTH CHINA'S COASTAL TOWNS

Japan's stance towards its neighbour was also affected by the Opium Wars of 1839 and 1856. In the first, Britain sought to legalise the sale of opium, which was being smuggled onto Chinese soil from India at a rate of 1,400 tons a year. When the ruling Qing Dynasty rejected the proposals and confiscated 20,000 chests of the drug, British forces and troops of the East India Company attacked Guangzhou (formerly Canton) on the south coast. British warships laid waste to the coastal towns, and well-equipped marines defeated the numerically superior Chinese troops. By 1842, the British had defeated the Chinese at the mouth of the Yangtze on the east coast, and were occupying Shanghai – the Chinese had no alternative but to sign the Treaty of Nanking, one of many "unequal treaties" they were forced to sign with the West.

Fourteen years later, a similar incident incurred the wrath of both Britain and France. An allied force captured Guangzhou, before attacking forts near Tientsin (modern-day Tianjin). Again, the Chinese capitulated and the war ended in June 1858 with the signing of the four Treaties of Tientsin. Attempts to prevent British entry to Tientsin in 1859 prompted further action: a British-French force of some 18,000 men captured the port cities of Yantai and Dalian, effectively gaining control of the Bohai Gulf. Tientsin fell a few weeks later. ▶

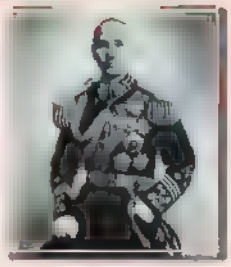
Getty Images

Japanese infantry fire through holes in a brick wall at Chinese positions in Shanghai

KEY FIGURES

MATTHEW C PERRY

The US Navy Commodore – a veteran of several wars, including the Mexican-American War and the War of 1812 – led several expeditions to Japan in the mid-1800s, in pursuit of a trade treaty with the country. He succeeded in March 1854, using a show of force to get Japan to sign a trade agreement, the Convention of Kanagawa.



CHIANG KAI-SHEK

As leader of the ruling Kuomintang party, Chiang spearheaded the Northern Expedition that defeated the regional warlords and united China. He went on to lead the Chinese forces in the Second Sino-Japanese War, and his stance against Japan during the Second World War won favour with the Allied forces of the West.

MAO TSE TUNG

Inspired by the Xinhai Revolution and the May Fourth Movement, "Chairman Mao" became a founding member of the Communist Party of China. His Red Army forces sided with Chiang Kai-shek during the Second Sino-Japanese War, but later defeated the Nationalists, who were forced to withdraw to Taiwan.

AISIN-GIORO PUYI

The last ruler of the Qing Dynasty, Puyi became Emperor of China in 1908, and ruled until his abdication in 1912, following the Xinhai Revolution. In 1932, he was installed as the Emperor of Manchukuo by the Japanese, with whom he collaborated. He was captured by the Russians at the end of WWII, and repatriated to China.

ZHANG ZUOLIN

Zhang operated as the ruling warlord of Manchuria from 1916 to 1928, with an army 300,000-strong. In 1926, he captured Beijing and declared himself Grand Marshal of the Republic of China, but he was later driven out by Chiang Kai-shek's forces. He was killed in 1928 by the Japanese, who, annoyed at his failure to stop Chiang's army, planted a bomb on his train.

EMPEROR HIROHITO

Hirohito ascended to the Chrysanthemum Throne in 1926. Historians have contrasting views over his involvement in Japan's expansionist policies: some claim he was opposed to the invasion of Manchuria and war in China, while others believe he was actively involved in the planning. However, he did urge for peace at the end of the Second World War.

The conflict reached its peak in September 1860 when British and French forces met the army of Mongolian General Sengge Rinchen, the man in charge of leading the campaign against the allies. In the ensuing Battle of Palikao, 10,000 troops and the elite Mongolian cavalry repeatedly charged the concentrated fire of the allied forces and were annihilated. The allies marched on Beijing, and began looting and burning the Summer Palaces. When it was discovered that diplomats had been tortured to death, the British considered destroying the Chinese Imperial Palace. The Qing court finally agreed to abide by the Treaties of Tientsin, opening more ports and giving foreigners greater freedoms across the country.

China's inability to defend its interests against modern armies of the West was not lost on the Japanese. Not only was Japan's ruling body encouraged to invest in modernising its military, but it also realised that under the Qing Dynasty, China was no longer a force to be reckoned with.

Tensions escalate

Aiming to increase its influence, Japan's attention was first directed towards Korea, at that time a vassal state of China, just 100 miles to the west and worryingly close to Japan's borders. Fearing they might be appropriated by a foreign power, in 1876 the Japanese imposed the Japan-Korea Treaty, which opened up access to Korea's agriculture, coal and iron-ore deposits. They also recognised Korea as a sovereign state, in an attempt to sever its links with mainland China.

Over the next decade, a series of attempted coups in Korea escalated tensions between China and Japan. Things came to a head when 2,500 Chinese troops were sent in to quell the Donghak peasant rebellion. Although military force was deemed unnecessary, Japan accused China of breaking the Convention of Tientsin, which both parties had signed in 1885. In retaliation, Japan sent in 4,500 soldiers, even though China had agreed to withdraw its troops.

The event marked the start of the First Sino-Japanese War, in which Japan displayed its military superiority. After just eight months, during which the Chinese Navy was eliminated, and with Japanese forces in control of the approach to Beijing, the Chinese had no alternative but to capitulate. They signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki on 17 April 1895, granting Korean independence, ceding control of certain territories and opening up trade, with Japan assuming favoured-nation status.

CHINA'S INABILITY TO DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST MODERN ARMIES OF THE WEST WAS NOT LOST ON THE JAPANESE

China's submission also opened the way for Britain, France and Russia to descend in the "Triple Intervention", taking advantage of the situation to carve out a piece of the pie for themselves. The Russians especially saw a chance to secure their much-needed warm-water port (the same motivation that had resulted in the Crimean War of 1853-56). They hadn't figured on Port Arthur (modern-day Lüshunkou) and the Liaodong Peninsula falling into Japanese hands, and convinced France and Germany to put pressure on Japan to relinquish its claims.

Japan was in no position to resist three major powers, and withdrew its troops. Russia began building a fortress and a railway between Port Arthur and Harbin in Manchuria, encroaching on territory Japan saw as integral to the empire it was beginning to build. Russia's expansionist policies, plus a dispute over Japanese control of Korea, led to the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, an 18-month conflict that saw the Russians suffer a series of embarrassing defeats. Newly emboldened by its success against a supposed world power, Japan continued with its efforts to dominate China and the rest of Asia.

The humiliation of the Treaty of Shimonoseki and the privations of the populace served to foment the Boxer Rebellion of 1899. Resentful of international influence, the Militia United in Righteousness, known as the "Boxers", launched a campaign of violence against foreigners and Chinese Christians. With the support of the ruling Qing Dynasty, this turned into a full-blown war against an alliance of forces from Europe, Japan, Russia and America. Unsurprisingly, China lost. Manchuria was ravaged by the international forces, which destroyed villages and engaged in campaigns of murder, looting and rape.

Civil unrest and ethnic differences led to the Xinhai Revolution of 1911 and the fall of the Qing Dynasty, ending 2,000 years of imperial family rule. Tensions had been growing for over a decade, largely motivated by the dynasty's failure to modernise and respond to foreign intervention. China was rocked by dozens of rebellions, culminating in the Wuchang Uprising of 1911 that instigated the Battle of Yangxa between the revolutionaries and loyalist Qing armies. Thirteen of China's provinces declared independence from the Qing Dynasty, leading to the abdication of the Emperor in 1912, and the formation of the provisional government of the Republic of China under General Yuan Shikai.

However, this well-meaning enterprise failed to unite the country, and instead led to the rise of regional warlords, many of whom thought nothing of siding with foreign forces in order to combat their adversaries.

With the outbreak of WWI, Japan found itself in a position to expand its empire once more. With the European forces distracted and China in disarray, it flexed its muscles. The result was the Twenty-One Demands, a set of extreme requests presented to China with the threat of punitive measures if they were not acceded to. The document basically gave Japan control over the coastal cities in Shandong Province, its main mining facility, selected railways and chunks of land in Manchuria and Fukien Province. It was, in effect, Japan's first step on its intended path to dominance of the country.

Naturally, the Twenty-One Demands were rejected, resulting in a less-aggressive set of Thirteen Demands. Caught up in a power struggle of his own, and unable to withstand Japan's military might, General Yuan Shikai accepted the terms on 25 May 1915.

1839-42
The First Opium War. In a desire to legalise its profitable opium trade, Britain enforces its will on China using its modern navy and army. China subsequently signs the trade Treaty of Nanking.

1854
31 MARCH
The expeditions of US Commodore Matthew C Perry persuade Japan to open up its ports for trade with the West, ending centuries of isolationism.

1856-60
The Second Opium War. A second conflict, similar to the first, involves a joint allied force of British and French. They capture and hold Guangzhou for nearly four years.

1868-1912
The Meiji Restoration. A series of events lead to major reforms in Japan, ending the shogunate system of control and beginning the process of modernising the country's infrastructure, industry and military.

1894-95
The First Sino-Japanese War. Japan and China go to war over control of the Korean peninsula. The newly modernised Japanese military scores comprehensive victories at sea and on land.

Japan actually gained little from the watered down set of demands, but raised the ire of Britain and the US, and generated significant anti-Japanese sentiment in China. This came to a head in 1919 with the May Fourth Movement, which saw students take to the streets in mass protests, calling for a shift away from China's old values and towards a more modern, populist society, sowing the seeds for communism.

The movement grew until the formation of the Communist Party of China in July 1921. Struggling for power against the right wing of the ruling Kuomintang, the two sides spiralled into civil war in 1927, when the Republic of China, led by Chiang Kai-shek, clashed against the Communist Party of China. Over the next decade, the National Revolutionary Army of the Republic fought to suppress the communist People's Liberation Army.

Another civil war erupted in 1930, when three warlords of the north who had previously allied with Chiang Kai-shek united against him. Differences between the central government and the regional powers led to the Central Plains War, in which 1.3 million troops were deployed, with the loss of 300,000 lives.

With China in chaos, Japan again saw a chance to expand its empire, eyeing mineral-rich Manchuria. It already had some controlling interest in the South Manchuria Railway that Russia had built at the turn of the century. In the Mukden Incident of 1931, it employed the tactic of self-inflicted sabotage as a pretence to invade, and within five months had overrun all the towns along the route. In March 1932, Japan set up the puppet state of Manchukuo – effectively taking control of Manchuria – and installed Puyi, the last Emperor of China, as its head of state. Although a truce existed between Japan and Republican China, the region would suffer endless skirmishes between the occupying forces and resistance armies. Japan continued to make advances, recruiting regional warlords as allies and helping to set up autonomous governments. In 1935, under pressure China signed the He-Umezu Agreement which, by preventing the Kuomintang from conducting operations in Hebei Province, effectively relinquished control of the north of the country.

Ambushing tactics

The trigger for all-out war was the Marco Polo Bridge Incident on 7 July 1937, when Japanese forces carried out unannounced night manoeuvres at the far end of the bridge, near the city of Wanping. A minor skirmish escalated and resulted in reinforcements being rushed to the area. A ceasefire was put into place, but Japan continued to violate it. Diplomatic negotiations attempted to defuse the situation, but the ceasefire had all but broken down. The Japanese shelled Wanping on 14 July, and by the end of the month there had been several major engagements against Chinese forces by Japanese infantry backed up by air support. By August, the cities of Beijing (formerly Beiping) and Tientsin were in Japanese hands, leaving the North China Plain at the mercy of Imperial forces.

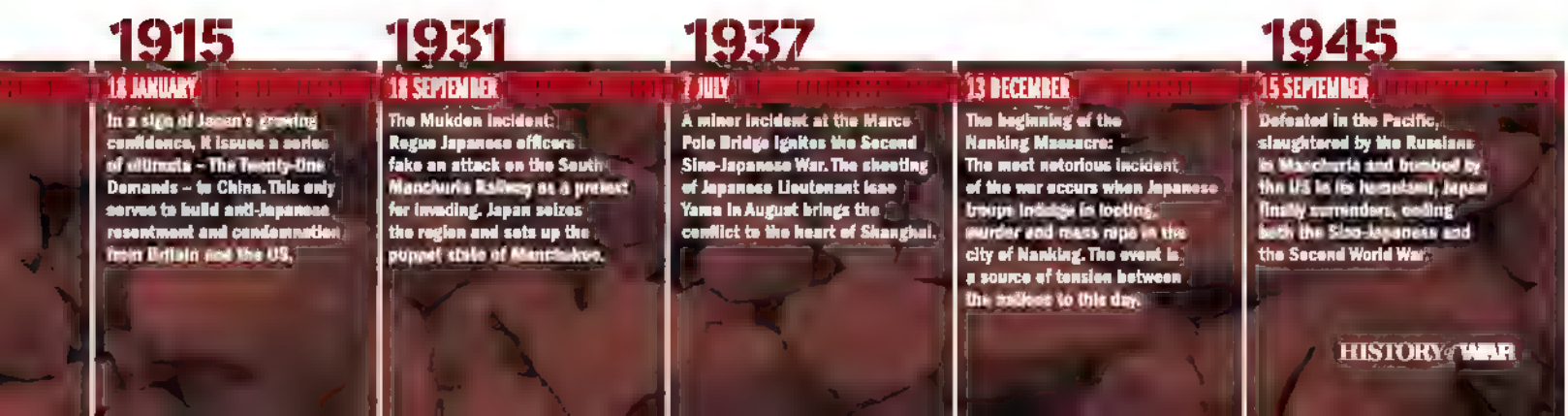
On 12 August, a Japanese marine, Isao Yama, was shot dead near Shanghai's Hongqiao Airport by the Chinese Peace Preservation Force. It's been suggested that communist sympathisers staged the incident as a means of initiating a full-scale war between Japan and Chiang Kai-shek's troops, thus weakening his position. Whatever the truth, it was the spark that lit the fuse: the Japanese immediately demanded the removal of troops from Shanghai, the Chinese government refused and, on 13 August, the Battle of Shanghai began.

The Second Sino-Japanese War would rage for eight more years, and involve 5.6 million Chinese troops and five million Japanese and collaborators. Chinese resistance began with the formation of a united front between the Kuomintang government and the Communist Party of China, led by Mao Tse Tung, which then implemented a scorched-earth policy, slowing the enemy advances. By waging a measured war of attrition, the Chinese aimed to exhaust Japanese supplies while buying time to build up their own military strength. Guerrilla warfare and ambushing tactics began to inflict heavy defeats on the Japanese, and the invaders found it impossible to gain a secure foothold. By 1940, the conflict had descended into a stalemate.

Japan's aspirations in China ground to a halt in 1941 due to economic sanctions, notably an oil embargo enforced by the US, Britain and the Netherlands. Japan's response was to attack Pearl Harbor and initiate the War in the Pacific. Its efforts were finally terminated by a two-pronged assault: one by three Soviet army groups into Manchuria, which killed a million Japanese troops, and the other by the dropping of two atomic bombs on its homeland.

The war in China ultimately cost the lives of some two million Chinese troops and up to 22 million civilians. Estimates put Japanese losses at between half a million and a million, with around 1.2 million injured – though numbers vary wildly. The conflict also threw up a number of atrocities, the most notorious being the Nanking Massacre of 1937 and 1938. Over a six-week period, Japanese troops committed mass murder and rape in the then-Chinese capital. The number of victims potentially runs into the hundreds of thousands, with as many as 20,000 women and children raped. No official apology was forthcoming from Tokyo until 1995.

Smoke billows from Shanghai buildings after the city was bombed by Japanese planes


1915
18 JANUARY
In a sign of Japan's growing confidence, it issues a series of ultimata – The Twenty-One Demands – to China. This only serves to build anti-Japanese resentment and condemnation from Britain and the US.
1931
18 SEPTEMBER
The Mukden Incident: Rogue Japanese officers fake an attack on the South Manchuria Railway as a pretext for invading. Japan seizes the region and sets up the puppet state of Manchukuo.
1937
7 JULY
A minor incident at the Marco Polo Bridge ignites the Second Sino-Japanese War. The shooting of Japanese Lieutenant Isao Yama in August brings the conflict to the heart of Shanghai.
13 DECEMBER
The beginning of the Nanking Massacre: The most notorious incident of the war occurs when Japanese troops indulge in looting, murder and mass rape in the city of Nanking. The event is a source of tension between the nations to this day.
1945
15 SEPTEMBER
Defeated in the Pacific, slaughtered by the Russians in Manchuria and bombed by the US in its homeland, Japan finally surrenders, ending both the Sino-Japanese and the Second World War.
HISTORY of WAR

FOR VALOUR
Unsung heroes

PRIVATE HARRY PATCH

Like millions of other men, Henry John "Harry" Patch was thrust into the hell of the First World War against his will and better judgement. But, as Steve Jarratt explains, he drew upon his Somerset steel to get through the conflict and become the longest-surviving British "Tommy"

MANY OF THE PEOPLE FEATURED IN our V For Valour stories have had combat in their blood. Either born into military families or obsessed with war from an early age, they were determined to enlist and fight in the name of their country.

But Private Henry John "Harry" Patch was not that kind of man. He didn't want to go to war and he had no desire to kill a fellow human being. Nonetheless, he did his duty, serving in the trenches and on the frontline during the First World War. Not only did he survive that conflict, he went on to live for another 90 years – long enough for the pain to diminish so that he could face his demons and tell his tale as "the last-surviving 'Tommy'".

Of course, there were countless other men just like Harry who didn't make it out of those grim battlefields in places like Flanders and the Somme, and this month's V For Valour is dedicated to all of those brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives during the Great War.

"Only scruffs and villains"

When England declared war on Germany in August 1914, the country was engulfed by patriotic fervour, with many welcoming the conflict as some exciting new adventure. Men and boys raced to enlist, with lads as young as 12 lying about their age to join up and see some action. Harry Patch was in no such rush.

Life in the village of Combe Down in Somerset was unhurried and somewhat isolated – in his autobiography, he recollects the sinking of the Titanic in 1912, when he and his classmates sang hymns at school. For Harry and his friends – some of whom may never have seen the sea, let alone a passenger liner – the event had little impact.

Harry's older brother, William, had already enlisted in 1913, joining the Royal Engineers aged 19. Their mother was suitably displeased, saying that "only scruffs and villains" joined up.

Answering Herbert Kitchener's call for new recruits, a lot of the lads from Harry's village signed up with their local regiment, the Somerset Light Infantry. But Harry had no such desire: he was busying himself with his apprenticeship as a plumber, and would much rather handle a wrench than a gun. "I didn't want to join up," he openly admitted. "I came from a very sheltered family... I had no inclination to go and kill somebody I never knew. And for what reason? I wasn't at all patriotic. I went and did what was asked of me and no more."

While men in cities who preferred not to enlist were often treated as cowards, handed white feathers and subjected to ridicule, Harry and his contemporaries in rural Somerset felt no such pressure. As such, he continued with his normal life for another two years, until he was finally conscripted in 1916.

William, meanwhile, had risen to the rank of Sergeant Major in the 55th Field Company, and was transferred from his posting in Africa to Europe, where he fought at Ypres and was wounded by shrapnel. "They kept him in England after that, as an instructor," recalled Harry. "He never went back and he used to tell me what the trenches were like. I didn't want to go. I knew what I was going into but, being the sort of person I am, I preferred to be told rather than be left in the dark. A lot of people didn't and, when they got to France, they had a rude awakening."

Indeed, by the time Harry received his call-up papers, the true face of war had made itself known: one by one, the men he knew who had joined the Somerset Light Infantry had become casualties. At first, the local losses were light but, once the Battle of the Somme began in 1916, the fatalities began to mount.

First taste of combat

Harry turned 18 in June 1916, and five months later received notification that he was to report to Totnes Barracks in south-west Somerset. From there, he and five other young men from his village departed for Exmouth for basic training, where Harry was given the position of Lance Corporal.

As a quiet and unassuming teenager, he found the rough and tumble of army life unpleasant, and he had to face the realities of life in a billet with lots of other recruits. "It was here that I learnt my first lesson," he recalled. "Lock everything up if you can, or keep a close eye on it if you can't." Another rookie stole his boots and Harry had to go searching for them, else he would have to cover their cost. He discovered the culprit and got his first taste of combat. "We went outside the house and got stuck in with fists," he remembered. "I got my boots back, plus one rather obvious black eye." Unfortunately, an officer witnessed the incident and Harry lost his Lance Corporal's stripe. Still, he'd stood his ground and retrieved his kit.

Harry and his troop were moved to Sutton Veny near Warminster to join the 33rd Training Reserve Battalion. During the cold winter months, they did more square-bashing, along with bayonet practice and route-marching across Salisbury Plain with a full pack. It was here that the young recruits also got their first taste of training with rifles, and learnt how to cope with their own individual weapon.

Private Patch was something of a crack shot, as it turned out. On the firing range, he managed to secure the score he needed to gain the Cross Guns of a marksman. "It was something to be given the badge to wear on your forearm," he said, "but if truth be told, it was the 6d a day extra pay that I was after."

Earning the badge gave him the option of being a sniper or being sent for training on a Lewis gun team. Rejecting the former as "far too cold and clinical", Harry chose the latter. He gained a new badge, which featured a laurel wreath with the letters "LG" in the centre. It was only later he discovered

Getty Images

Irish Guardsman attends to a wounded German during the Battle of Plickem Ridge. Harry and his regiment were stationed here for part of the war

that machine-gun crews knew it as the "suicide badge" – captured Lewis gunners were shot.

In May 1917, Harry heard of the death of his cousin Fred, a boy just a few months older than himself, who had been killed at Arras. "His body was never found," said Harry ruefully. "I was very sad, and his death only brought home the feeling that the war was getting very close."

Tunnelling expeditions

After six months of training, the recruits were told that they would soon be leaving for the Western Front. The men were given a week's embarkation leave, during which time Harry and his colleagues Stanley Pearce and Charlie Wherret returned to Combe Down. Memories of that week have faded, but Harry remembered that it was difficult saying goodbye to his mother, who already had one wounded son.

In June 1917, Harry rejoined Stanley and Charlie for the trip to France (the men were later split up and would never see each other again: Stanley joined the 8th Somerset Light Infantry and was killed a few weeks later in the Third Battle of Ypres; Charlie served with the 1st/4th Battalion, then joined the 2nd Battalion in Egypt. He was eventually killed in India in 1919, and is buried in Peshawar.) They joined other conscripts on board a paddle steamer at Folkestone, and set off across the Channel as night fell. "We all knew what we were going to," commented Harry. "There were no illusions any more, no excited chatter or joviality. All the lights on board were extinguished and we were forbidden even to smoke, for there was a genuine threat from submarines." His group were told that they would be escorted by two destroyers but, in the pitch dark, they could see nothing but the breaking waves.

The recruits arrived at Boulogne in daylight and as soon as they disembarked, they could hear the guns off in the distance. Harry was told to join the 7th Battalion, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry (DCLI), 20th Division, and so he and his comrades parted company for the last time.

IN MAY 1917, HARRY LEARNED OF THE DEATH OF HIS COUSIN FRED, A BOY JUST A FEW MONTHS OLDER THAN HIMSELF

Harry joined the 7th DCLI's Lewis gun team, and was relieved of his Enfield rifle in favour of a Webley revolver. As a replacement for the team's number two, it was his duty to carry the spare parts – which was bad enough without being encumbered with a rifle as well. He was immediately sent onto the ranges for training, to learn how to quickly operate the Lewis gun, change magazines and unjam it if necessary. The team's number one, Bob Haynes, told Harry that their lives depended on it. However, they also had a pact: the crew wouldn't kill if they could avoid it. "We fire short, have them in the legs or fire over their heads," Bob explained to Harry, "but we don't kill – not unless it's them or us."

The battalion was away from the frontline taking some rest – though that actually meant providing working parties for the trenches or being sent on tunnelling expeditions. In the middle of June, around the time of Harry's 19th birthday, they were ordered to the front at Ypres. As they approached the trenches, Harry could feel the nerves building up inside him, but he tried to hide it from the rest of his team: "It wouldn't have helped me, and it certainly wouldn't have helped them, and it was important to show them that I was reliable. They'd all seen frontline action and they needed to know that I was no danger to them. A windy or nervous soldier was as much danger to the rest as he was to himself."

Almost as soon as they arrived at Ypres, his company came under shelling from German forces who had presumably been alerted to the activity – and they suffered a number of casualties. "It doesn't matter how much training you've had," declared Harry. "You can't prepare for the reality, the noise, the filth, the uncertainty and the calls for stretcher-bearers." ▶

British troops carry their wounded comrade to safety during the Battle of Passchendaele, in which Harry fought

Getty Images

Because of the high water table at Ypres, the troops could only dig a few feet down before they struck water, and so protection was mostly provided by fortified breastworks above ground. Harry described the trenches as about six feet deep and three feet wide. "Mud, water, a duckboard if you were lucky," he added. "Filthy. I quickly got used to sitting on the firing step with my feet up against the trench wall opposite, watching the water flowing underneath the duckboards. Where the floor was particularly bad, we used to get an empty box of ammunition and stand on it until it gradually sank in the mud; then we'd put another on top on that. The ground was absolutely full of boxes lost in the mud."

Gun teams were excused the fatigue duties that ordinary conscripts had to undertake, in favour of keeping the Lewis gun maintained and ready for action. Harry related how, every morning, an officer would inspect the crew to ensure that they were prepared. "The officers were very particular that the gun and the spare parts were kept scrupulously clean," he said. "otherwise, you were put on a charge. If any of the brass cartridges were damaged, they wouldn't be ejected from the gun and would jam it. Likewise, a little bit of mud could render the gun unusable, and there was plenty of that around. So they were ensuring that we were ready if the Germans mounted an attack."

Harry served at Ypres during the summer but, even then, the place was cold and frequently subject to squally showers. Despite this, fresh water was in short supply and rations were brought up to the front in used fuel cans, which were rarely washed out. "There was a standing joke that if you were out there long enough, you could tell the difference in taste as to whether the water came in a British Petroleum or a Shell can," quipped Harry.

AMONG THE FILTH AND STENCH AND THREAT OF ENEMY ATTACK, THE TROOPS' BIGGEST PROBLEM WAS BOREDOM

Washing was practically out of the question, unless you found a shell hole that had recently been filled by rain that wasn't too dirty. And during his entire time in France – from early June 1917 until 23 December 1917 – Harry never had a bath. "I never had any clean clothes either," he stated, "and when we got to Rouen on the way home, they took every stitch of clothing off us – vest, shirt, pants, everything – and they burnt it all. It was the only way to get rid of the lice. Each lousy louse had his own particular bite and his own itch, and he'd drive you mad. We used to turn our vests inside out to get a little relief. And you'd go down all the seams with a candle – if you dared show a light – and burn them out. Those little devils who'd laid their eggs in the seam, you'd turn your vest inside out and tomorrow, you'd be just as lousy as you were today."

But among the filth and stench and constant threat of enemy attack, the troops' biggest problem was boredom. Endless hours of inactivity were broken only by periods on watch, when they would take it in turns to keep lookout. If they thought they saw any German activity,

Harry Patch's timeline

1898
17 JUNE
Harry John "Harry" Patch is born to stonemason William John and his wife Elizabeth Ann in the village of Combe Down, Somerset.

1913
He leaves school to begin his apprenticeship as a plumber.

1914
AUGUST
War is declared between Britain and Germany. At just 16 years old, Harry has no desire to enlist.

1916
OCTOBER
Harry receives his enlistment papers. He is sent to nearby Exmouth for his basic training, is made Lance Corporal and receives his Cross Guns marksman's badge.

1917
JUNE
Their training complete, Harry and his fellow recruits are sent to France. Harry joins the 7th Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry as a member of the Lewis gun crew. Around his 19th birthday, he and his battalion are sent to the front.

31 JULY
The 7th DCLI take part in the Battle of Passchendaele. Despite some isolated successes, the campaign as a whole is a disaster for the Allies.

British troops on the Menin Road Ridge, near Ypres. One of Harry's closest friends died in this sector of Belgium.

Getty Images

they'd report it to an officer, who might order a star shell to be sent up, illuminating the area. "If we knew that none of our men were out there on patrol, the officers would say, 'Right-ho, give them a burst!' If it was just a bush, the bush stayed where it was. Bob, as the number one, would fire half a magazine at them, then, straightaway, we would move from our position down the trench. It was important not to fire a magazine from the same position, because the Germans would be able to see the flash from the Lewis gun and take a bearing on the position. Firing again from that spot was asking for half a dozen whizz-bangs [shells from light artillery]. While the infantry worked at night, our duty was to carry on watching, watching, watching. Oh yes, the darkness played hell with you and your eyesight."

"You daren't show above, otherwise a sniper would have you," Harry continued. "You would look between the fire and apertures, and a you could see were a couple of stray dogs out there, fighting over a biscuit they'd found. They were fighting for their lives. And the thought came to me – well, there they are, two animals out there fighting over a dog biscuit, the same as we get to live. They were fighting for their lives. I said, 'We're two civilised nations British and German – and what are we doing? We're in a lousy, dirty trench, fighting for our lives. For what? For 18 pence a flipping day.'"

Incessant shelling

After four days on the line, battalions would change over – but the journey back through the trenches could be just as hazardous. Endless rain and incessant shelling created the battlefield equivalent of quicksand, deep enough to drown a man and almost impossible to escape from. "We were always told, going up or coming back, that if a fellow slipped into a shell hole filled with water, we had to leave him there because it was liquid mud," Harry said. "If you try to get them out, you go in yourself and that's it. I thank God it didn't happen, because the thought of leaving anyone stuck in the mud, possibly to drown, would test anyone's resolve."

Indeed, it was the weather more than the German resistance that halted the Allies at Passchendaele in August 1917. After a period of intense shelling from both sides, a new offensive was planned in which eight divisions would launch an assault on a wide front – including Harry's 20th Division. Two companies of the 7th DCLI would attack alongside the 12th King's Liverpool Regiment, leapfrogging ▶

Getty Images

A LIFE LESS ORDINARY

Harry Patch was an extraordinary man – not just for surviving the ordeal of the First World War when so many others perished, but because he went on to live such a long life. He was born in the Victorian era and when he died in 2009, he was one of only a dozen people with a birth certificate dating from the 19th Century. At the time of his death, he was the oldest man in Europe and the last survivor of the nine million men who fought in the trenches. His life spanned six monarchs and 21 Prime Ministers and, with glorious coincidence, he died at the age of 111 years, one month, one week and one day – echoing the Armistice, which took effect on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month.

1918
22 SEPTEMBER

While moving from the frontline into reserve, Harry and his crew are hit by light artillery fire. Harry is wounded by shrapnel, but three of his comrades are blown to pieces.

1939
11 NOVEMBER

Harry and his colleagues are on a firing range in England when they see a rocket in the sky, signalling the end of the war.

1998
SEPTEMBER

Aged 41, Harry is spared another stint in the military by just one year. Instead, he serves as a part-time firefighter in Bath and sees action during the Bath Blitz of April 1942.

1998
Aged 100, Harry talks about his wartime experiences for the first time, when a BBC1 documentary team approaches him for the TV show *Veterans*.

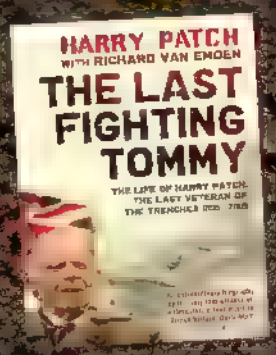
2004
NOVEMBER

Harry returns to Ypres for the first time, for an emotional meeting with Charles Kuentz, a 107-year-old German survivor of Passchendaele.

2009
25 JULY

At the age of 111 years, nine months, one week and one day, Harry Patch, the last "Tommy", fades away.

FOR VALOUR
Unsung heroes



THE LAST "TOMMY"

Like almost every soldier who served in the trenches, Harry Patch had no desire to talk about his experiences. Once back in England, he wanted only to forget and return his life to some degree of normality. He never discussed his military service with his wife and son, he refused to watch war films, and he never attended reunions or remembrances. But as time passed and he became a member of an elite but rapidly dwindling club, he gradually relented.

At the age of 100, after he'd entered a care home, he was approached by the BBC to appear in the 1998 documentary *Veterans*, and over the next decade he would become feted as one of the few remaining people who could give a first-hand account of the Great War. A further documentary, *The Last Tommy*, was filmed in 2006, and Harry's autobiography, *The Last Fighting Tommy*, was published in 2007. For his actions, he received the British War Medal and the Victory Medal, which were followed by the Légion d'honneur in 1998 and the Knight of the Order of Leopold in 2004.

Rex Features

other troops that had taken the ground ahead of them. Once they'd secured their line, they in turn would be leapfrogged by the regiments behind. Harry and the Lewis gun crew were in the second wave, providing support for the infantry, and their advance was to take place under creeping artillery fire across no man's land.

"Our guns' opening bombardment had begun with an almighty clap of thunder," Harry recounted. "You can't describe the noise, but it was enough to take your breath away. It was ferocious, and much of it was dropping not that far ahead of us as the barrage crept forward with infantry behind."

Laden with ammunition and Lewis gun parts, Harry and his company went over the top at Pilckem Ridge, crossed the Steenbeek stream and lined up around 5am on the morning of 16 August. The initial advance towards Langemarck was successful and, at 5.45am, Harry and the 7th DCLI were ordered forward, through the remains of the town.

"It was just shell holes and the team made its way forward in a line," he recalled. "It was absolutely sickening to see your own dead and wounded, some calling for stretcher-bearers, others semi-conscious and beyond all help, and the German wounded lying about, too, and you couldn't stop to help them. I saw one German – I should think he'd been dead some time. Well, a shell had hit him, and all his side and his back were ripped up, and his stomach was out on the floor – a horrible sight. Others were just blown to pieces; it wasn't a case of seeing them with a nice bullet hole in their tunic – far from it – and there I was, only 19 years old. I felt sick."

Harry's company reached the 7th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, which had sustained heavy casualties but secured its objective. They then waited for an hour while artillery pummelled the ground ahead. At 7.20am, they moved forward again, this time passing lines of surrendered Germans. "They looked tired and dishevelled," recalled Harry. "What you'd expect men to look like after four days on the front. We didn't feel sorry for them. Why should we? They're out of it; we get to carry on."

Surprise and joy

They then saw a young man from A Company who'd been torn apart by shrapnel. "He was ripped open from his shoulder to his waist, and lying in a pool of blood," remembered Harry. "As we got to him, he said, 'Shoot me.' He was beyond all human aid, but before we could pull out the revolver to shoot him, he died. I was with him in the last seconds of his life.

"And when that fella died, he said just one word: 'Mother'. It wasn't a cry of despair, it was a cry of surprise and joy. I'm sure his mother was in the next world to welcome him. And he knew it. I was just allowed to see that much and no more. And from that day until today, I shall always remember that cry, and I shall always remember that death is not the end. I remember that lad in particular. It's an image that's haunted me all my life, seared into my mind."

A little later, with the gun crew supporting the infantry action, a German soldier ran towards them, his bayonet fixed but out of ammunition. "I had to bring him down," said Harry. "First of all, I shot him in the right shoulder. He dropped the rifle and the bayonet. He came on. His idea, I suppose, was to kick the [Lewis] gun into the mud, making it useless. But anyway, he came on and, for our own safety, I had to bring him down. I couldn't kill him. He was a man I didn't know. I didn't know his language. I couldn't talk to him. I shot him above the ankle and above the knee. He said something to me in German – I don't suppose it was complimentary – but for him, the war was over."

The 20th Division's assault opposite Langemarck had been a success, but overall the day had gone badly, with few of the major objectives reached and some 15,000 men lost.

Civilians in First World War footwear attend Harry's funeral in Wells
Getty Images

At Harry's funeral in 2009, his coffin was carried into Wells Cathedral by soldiers of 1st Battalion The Rifles. Thousands lined the streets to pay their last respects

Getty Images

Harry and his crew waited in a German trench for a counter-attack that never came, and the next day they were relieved.

The battalion was removed from the frontline for rest, re-equipping and reinforcements. There were occasional parades and football competitions, but mainly the men went on various working parties or undertook further training. By 9 September, the battalion was deemed fit to return to action.

Intense pain

After another ten days at the front, the battalion was relieved again and moved to Soult Farm, but the men remained on alert, ready to be called up. On the night of the 22nd, they were heading back into reserve, walking in single file across no man's land, when a whizz-bang exploded above Harry and his crew. "The only thing I saw was a flash," he said. "I can't recall any noise at all, but I certainly felt the concussion of that shell bursting, because I was taken off my feet and thrown to the ground. For a couple of minutes, I couldn't move; the explosion seemed to paralyse my nervous system, and I lay there, conscious but incapable of anything at all. Two or three minutes later, movement gradually returned. I didn't even know I was hit at first, but a growing pain told me otherwise. I looked down and saw my tunic was torn away, and there was blood oozing out from that area of my stomach." He'd been hit by shrapnel, which was embedded in his abdomen.

Harry was picked up by stretcher-bearers and transported by a Red Cross motor van to a dressing station. He had to wait through the rest of the night and all the next day to be treated, such was the number of wounded. When the doctor arrived, he asked Harry if he'd like the shrapnel removed – only, there was no anaesthetic left. Harry thought about it for a while, then figured that another few moments of intense pain would probably be worth it.

THE DOCTOR ASKED IF HARRY WOULD LIKE THE SHRAPNEL REMOVED – ONLY, THERE WAS NO ANAESTHETIC LEFT

"Four fellas held me down," he recalled, "one on each arm, one on each leg, and I can feel the cut of that scalpel now as the doctor went through and pulled it out. He came to me some hours later and asked, 'You want this shrapnel as a souvenir?' I said, 'I've had the bloody stuff long enough already!' and I never saw it again. I met his son, who was also a doctor, at Buckingham Palace 80 years later. He told me that if the shrapnel had been a quarter-inch deeper, it would've cut a main artery and that would've been it."

It wasn't until Harry was back in England that he found out what had happened to the rest of his five-man Lewis gun crew. Sadly, numbers three, four and five – the ammunition-carriers – had been killed instantly. "My reaction was terrible," said Harry. "It was like losing a part of my life. It upset me more than anything. We'd only been together four months but, with hell going on around us, it had seemed a lifetime."

Harry was sent to a Sutton Coldfield convalescent camp around Christmas 1917, where he met his future wife, Ada Billington. It took months for his wound to heal properly but in August 1918, he was sent to the regimental depot in Bodmin to begin retraining, which "filled him with dread". However, torn ligaments in his chest prevented him from performing any serious duties, so he spent several weeks at Handsworth Hospital in Birmingham undergoing further treatment.

If it wasn't for this lingering injury, Harry would've been back in France by the summer of 1918. As it was, he was on a firing range on 11 November when a rocket was sent up to signal the end of hostilities.

It would be another 86 years before Harry returned to Belgium. In 2004, he went to Ypres to meet Charles Kuentz, the last remaining German soldier of the First World War. He returned again in 2007, when he laid a wreath at Menin Gate to commemorate his battalion, and another at the German cemetery in Langemarck in honour of the German soldiers who lost their lives. "I feel humbled that I should be representing an entire generation," he said at the time. "Today is not for me. It's for the countless millions who didn't come home with their lives intact. They're the heroes."

Harry Patch passed away in July 2009. He was 111 years old.

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The ART of WAR

NEVINSON PRINTS

This issue, we examine the drypoint prints of C.R.W. Nevinson, who turned Futurism from a celebration of technology to an indictment of the dehumanisation and desolation of war

Christopher Nevinson, son of the famous war correspondent and journalist Henry, was an artist inspired by the Futurist movement of the turn of the century. Founded by the Italian poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the Futurist Manifesto espoused the new, while dismissing the past. Its members were admirers of the latest technologies, commemorating the speed and brutality of the car and the aeroplane, of modern industry and the machine age.

At the outbreak of war, the pacifist Nevinson volunteered to work as a driver, stretcher-bearer and hospital orderly for the Red Cross. However, his experiences of tending the wounded at Flanders altered his views. He would later employ the angularity of Futurism to depict the bleakness of war; in his pictures, men are portrayed in the same fashion as their machines.

Nevinson boldly asserted that, "Our Futurist technique is the only possible medium to express the crudeness, violence and brutality of the emotions seen and felt on the present battlefields of Europe."

▲ AFTER A GERMAN RETREAT: LABOUR BATTALION MAKING A ROAD THROUGH A CAPTURED VILLAGE (1918)

This piece depicts the aftermath of a battle, in which members of a Labour battalion are sent at dusk to clear a route through the rubble and damaged vehicles. A mass of angry criss-crossed forms perfectly symbolises the chaos of war and the scale of the task ahead of the men. The effort is evident in their bent and straining bodies.

◀ACETYLENE WELDING (1917)

This image of British women working in a munitions factory is number 39 in a series of 66 lithographs commissioned by the Ministry of Information, entitled "The Great War: Britain's Efforts and Ideals". This is the third of Nevinson's six prints depicting the process of building aircraft, and represents the importance of women's labour in the war effort.

▼MAKING THE ENGINE (1917)

The first plate in the set of six entitled "Building Aircraft" is an industrial scene showing the process of turning parts on a lathe. In the "Britain's Efforts and Ideals" series, Nevinson was one of the nine artists commissioned to depict the "Efforts".

◀A GROUP OF SOLDIERS (1917)

This drypoint sketch is based on soldiers Nevinson saw on the London Underground returning from leave. It was turned into a full-colour oil painting, which war censors sought to prevent from being exhibited, suggesting that "the Germans will seize upon the picture as evidence of British degeneration". The dispute between the War Office and the Department of Information was settled and the painting was allowed to hang.

▲ **RETURNING TO THE TRENCHES (1916)**
This dynamic representation of French troops marching to the front has a rhythmic, mechanical feel. Deviating from the traditional glorified images of war, Nevinson shows the men hunched over, weighed down by their equipment – and no doubt the burden of the task ahead. Nevinson stated that his early drypoint works "express the horror, the cruelty and the violence that were to be our destiny".

◀ **A DAWN (1914)**
French troops again march to the frontline, solemn and grim-faced. The harsh, angular lines imply the cruelty of the conflict, while the men themselves are reduced to simple forms, losing all individuality. "In war, man behaves like a machine," said Nevinson, "an item in a great instrument of destruction."

▼ RECLAIMED COUNTRY (1917)

As well as men and machinery at war, Nevinson's artworks feature the devastation wrought on the land by incessant shelling and aerial bombardment. What once may have been an idyllic pastoral scene is instead reduced to a grim silhouette of lifeless trees and a ruined farmhouse, while endless rain slants down from a leaden sky.

▶ BANKING AT 4,000 FEET (1917)

The fifth print in the "Building Aircraft" series is a vivid depiction of the thrill and fear of being a passenger in a WWI-era biplane. With little to hold them in place, there's a real sense that if the viewer wasn't gripping the metal sides, they'd simply topple out. (One of the original 200 prints sold in 2012 for £95,000 – triple the auctioneer's estimate.)

THAT CURSED WOOD (1918)

Like "Reclaimed Country", this is a simple yet emotive piece portraying the ruined and desolate landscape. Burnt and dying trees seem to point accusingly and despairingly at the culprits overhead.

SWEEPING DOWN ON A TAUBE (1917)
The final print in the "Building Aircraft" sextet shows a British fighter about to engage with a German Taube or "Dove" – a monoplane with a distinctive curved shape. The light burst beyond seems to suggest a bright new beginning; that perhaps this plane will help [illegible] side of the war.

▶ NOW BACK THE BAYONETS (1918)
This striking image of massed bayonets was originally created to promote Nevinson's own exhibition of war art at the Leicester Galleries in 1918. He then adapted the image for use in this poster for war bonds. The jagged array of blades is neatly echoed by the suitably spiky text. The use of colour and type is a remarkable forerunner to the vivid poster art of the 20th Century.

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PART ONE

WEAPONS *that changed* HISTORY

The path of human progress is forever intertwined with the development of new forms of weaponry. We examine three key inventions that changed the world

Mary Evans

THE TIP OF THE SPEAR THE LANCE IS DIRECTLY DESCENDED FROM THROWING SPEARS THAT WERE CARRIED BY MOUNTED SOLDIERS. ITS USE DATES BACK TO THE CATAPHRACTS OF THE 3RD CENTURY BC.

The LANCE

Around the 6th and 7th Centuries, Europe received an import from Asia that was to reshape mounted combat, and usher in the age of the European knight. That invention was the stirrup, and for a cavalryman it provided a much greater degree of stability in the saddle.

Previously, the horseman had relied on the grip of his knees and thighs to keep him on his horse, which could create problems with balance during the impact between lance and target. However, we shouldn't overstate these problems – the ancient world produced many battle-winning, lance-wielding cavalry formations, such as Alexander the Great's Companion Cavalry during the 4th Century BC, which delivered mass lance charges.

Saddles themselves also improved; higher pommels and cantles braced the rider more firmly. Both of these meant that the mode of employing the lance changed significantly, and by the 12th Century the couched position – tucked beneath the armpit in a solid grip – was the most common. The age of the European knight was born. Knights fought with many weapons, but the classic battlefield combination was the lance and sword. Unlike spears, lances were heavier, more robust weapons that were unsuited to throwing. Made from woods such as ash and, later, cypress, the typical war lance was about 12ft (3.6m) in length, and featured a metal or iron spear head. The weapon would swell out at the grip end, and a small, round metal shield called a vamplate was sometimes fitted just in front of the grip hand, to protect it against the enemy's weapons.

> **The cavalry became the main striking force of the medieval army, the element that could decide a battle**

The combination of couched lance, stirrup and high saddle welded the horse, rider and weapon into a single, durable unit. Now the knight could deliver shock charges and ride out the heavy impact of lance and enemy. The grip also allowed lances to lengthen, meaning that the knight could strike his enemy out of the range of other pole-arms. Once combat closed into a cavalry melee, the knight would discard his lance and fight with his sword. Against infantry ranks, the charge of couched-lance cavalrymen could be devastating.

The cavalry became the main striking force of the medieval army, the manoeuvre element that could decide a battle. Such was the significance of the lance that it endured through the introduction of firearms and remained in use throughout the 19th Century. Couched-lance charges were even conducted by German, Russian and Austro-Hungarian units on the Eastern Front during the First World War. By that time, the lance had become grossly anachronistic, but its persistence says much about the combined power of a galloping horse and a levelled lance.

The COLT M1911

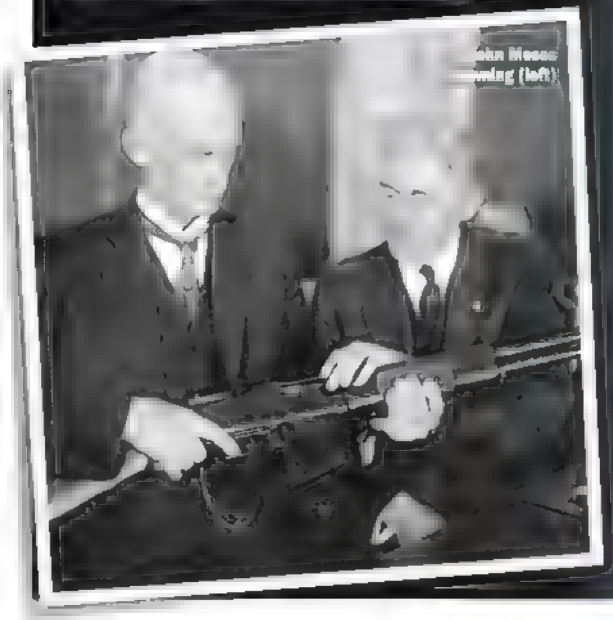
The Colt M1911 was not the world's first automatic pistol – far from it. That accolade goes to a delayed-blowback weapon patented in 1892 by German Joseph Laumann, which was produced in an 8mm calibre as the Schonberger-Laumann from 1894. It offered little advantage over the revolver, with its five-round-capacity internal magazine, as it sold in unconvincing numbers. A more significant design, therefore, was the 1894 7.63mm Borchardt pistol.

In a crucial distinction from the Schonberger-Laumann, the recoil-operated Borchardt actually had a separate eight-round magazine that was inserted into the grip. However, it was too large, both in size and weight. Then came the Colt M1911. The M1911 design actually belonged to the great gun designer John Moses Browning. It was his masterpiece, ranking alongside his famous machine guns. It fired a particularly powerful 0.45in ACP cartridge from a seven-round box magazine. The cartridge choice was based upon US combat experience during the Philippine Insurrection (1899-1902), during which US troops found that 0.38in revolvers had limited man-stopping capabilities against a committed enemy.

The M1911 was the US Army's standard handgun until the 1990s, serving with utter dependability in every conceivable theatre

The workings of the M1911 are simple and rugged: its barrel features two locking ribs on top, just in front of the chamber, and these lock into corresponding grooves in the gun's slide. When the gun was fired, the barrel and slide recoiled back together for a short distance while the firing pressure dropped to safe levels. Then a swinging link pulled the rear of the barrel downwards, disengaging it from the slide grooves and leaving the slide to continue backwards against the return spring. During this process, the spent case was ejected, before the slide returned to the battery, stripping off and chambering a new round as it did so.

The M1911's two virtues were its power and simplicity. With few modifications, it was the US Army's standard handgun until the 1990s, serving with utter dependability in every conceivable theatre, terrain and environment. It is still produced today for the domestic market, and hundreds of other auto handguns are indebted to its basic design.



SIZE ATTERS

LOWING E MORO REBELLION IN E PHILIPPINES, HE U.S MILITARY DED THAT .38 BRE HAND NS WERE EFFECTIVE, AND EQUESTED A MINIMUM OF .45 PROTOTYPES WERE TESTED ON CADAVERS AND EAD ANIMALS.

The UH-1 HUEY

Rotary-wing flight took its first tottering steps in the early years of the 20th Century, and by the last years of World War II military helicopters were making a limited appearance. The end of what had been an almost entirely fixed-wing war, however, galvanised interest in helicopters, as they offered numerous potential tactical advantages, particularly in the realms of infantry assault, medevac, cargo-lift or shipboard deployment.

Yet it was Bell's UH-1 that truly established the age of combat helicopters. The Bell UH-1 evolved from a US Army contract to develop a new, turbine-powered medevac helicopter. Turbine engines offered far more power than piston engines, and were also lighter. The resulting Model 204/XH-40 prototype first flew on 22 October 1956, powered by a Lycoming T53-L-1 turboshaft delivering 700hp (522kW) and lifted by a two-blade rotor. US Army impressions of this helicopter, another evaluation aircraft (the YH-40), and pre-production models were favourable, and the first production order was for 183 Bell HU-1As – the latter designation spawned the "Huey" nickname, which stuck even after redesignation to UH-1A in 1962.

The subsequent history of UH-1 variants is long and complex, with multiple versions produced for the US Army, Navy and Marine Corps, as well as dozens of export models. A major development was the Model 205 UH-1D, a stretched variant that also led to the UH-1H, with its more powerful engine. Regardless of variant, all users were won over by the spacious passenger cabin, rugged reliability, good flying characteristics, speed of around 127mph (204km/h) and decent lift capability. In the context of the Vietnam War, it also became a ground-breaking assault helicopter.

US troops began fitting the helicopters with door-mounted Brownings and M60 machine guns

UH-1 helicopters became the US forces' workhorse during the Vietnam War. From the outset of the conflict US troops began field-fitting the helicopters with weaponry such as a door-mounted Brownings, or M60 machine guns, or twin pods of 2.75in unguided rockets. Such weaponry proved extremely useful for suppressing enemy troops around a "hot" landing zone, or self-defence during a medevac operation. By fitting the helicopters so, US troops in effect created the world's first helicopter gunships.

Simply bolting weapons to a helicopter, however, could reduce its performance. In response, Bell introduced the UH-1C in 1965, a dedicated gunship variant that had the power and systems to cope with the additional weaponry. Bell was, at this time, also about to introduce the AH-1 HueyCobra gunship, but throughout the war UH-1s continued to serve as assault and gunship helicopters. Weapons mounted on UH-1s included M75 40mm automatic grenade-launchers, TOW anti-tank missiles, and GE M134 six-barrelled 7.62mm MiniGuns.

UH-1s paid a heavy price in Vietnam – 2,591 were lost in combat or in accidents. Yet they gave US troops true air mobility, deploying and extracting troops, and thereby saving them long, dangerous journeys by foot or vehicle to the combat zones. Since Vietnam, UH-1s have remained in service throughout the world, and are operated by more than 60 air forces, who also recognise the helicopter's many qualities.

W CHOPPER SQUAD
DURING THE NINE YEARS OF THE VIETNAM CONFLICT, THE US ARMY'S UH-1 FLEET CLOCKED UP 7,531,955 HOURS OF COMBAT FLIGHT TIME – MORE THAN ANY OTHER AIRCRAFT IN HISTORY.

This feature is an edited extract from *A History Of The World in 100 Weapons* by Chris McNab, available from Osprey Publishing: www.ospreypublishing.com

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Paratroopers of the French Union Army search a wooded area near Dien Bien Phu, during operations against the Viet Minh, January 1954.

AP/Press Association Images

Great Battles

DIEN BIEN PHU

First Indochina War: Events at Dien Bien Phu were a major cause of the end of French rule in Indochina. The French challenged the communist Viet Minh to attack the base they'd established in enemy territory but, in doing so, underestimated the determination of General Võ Nguyên Giáp and his troops

THE SHATTERING DEFEAT OF French colonial forces by the Viet Minh in 1954 had real political and strategic significance. It had a profound effect on the Geneva Conference, which began on 8 May the same year, and resulted in a peace treaty and the establishment of North Vietnam. It also demonstrated the dangers of western over-confidence and reliance on technology and firepower in the face of a determined and innovative opponent. Indeed, it was the first time a liberation movement had managed to evolve from a guerrilla force into an army that could defeat a European colonial power in a conventional battle.

In May 1953, General Henri Navarre arrived in French Indochina to take command of the French Expeditionary Corps, which was struggling in a war against the communist Viet Minh under the political leadership of Ho Chi Minh. Navarre's mission was simple: to strengthen the French negotiating position by achieving enough military success to enable the French government to find an honourable and favourable way out of the war, which had been running since 1946.

Believing that "war can only be won by attacking", Navarre – a cavalryman – was determined to take the fight to the enemy. He was faced with a number of strategic imperatives, particularly the need to disrupt the communist offensive against Laos. Therefore, he decided to establish a major ground-air base to threaten Viet Minh movement and supply lines, and also to prevent them shifting forces southwards against the Mekong Delta. He chose the area around the village of Dien Bien Phu (a name that literally means "administrative centre near the border"), which nestled in a valley 200 miles west of Hanoi, the centre of French power in northern Vietnam. This was also the site of an old Japanese airbase. ▶

BELIEVING THAT "WAR CAN ONLY BE WON BY ATTACKING", NAVARRE WANTED TO TAKE THE FIGHT TO THE ENEMY

The facts

WHO Operational Group North West of the French Expeditionary Force was engaged by four infantry divisions and an artillery division of the Vietnamese People's Army.

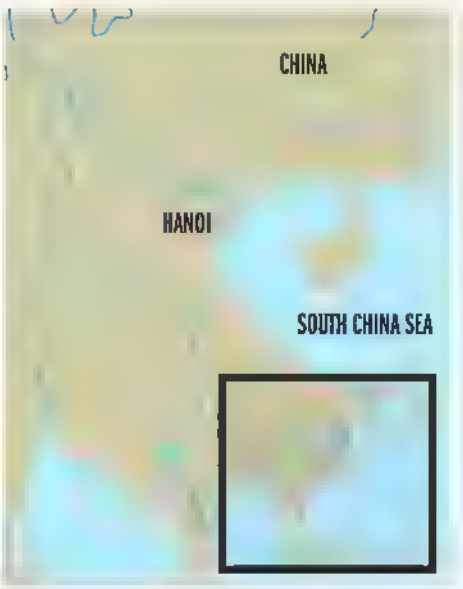
WHAT A determined assault by the Viet Minh to crush the French ground-air base at Dien Bien Phu.

WHERE The valley of Dien Bien Phu in north-west Vietnam, 200 miles west of Hanoi.

WHEN 13 March-7 May 1954.

WHY The French, hoping to provoke a Viet Minh assault, established a base deep in enemy territory that threatened communist operations against northern Laos. Hoping to gain political benefits from defeating a large French force General Giáp accepted the challenge.

OUTCOME After 56 days of combat, Dien Bien Phu finally fell to Viet Minh at the cost of more than 20,000 casualties. Despite these losses, it was a major military and political victory for the communists, which would pay dividends at the peace negotiations at the Geneva Conference.



Wounded soldiers on the French side are airlifted away by helicopter The Viet Minh routinely ignored Red Cross markings and fired on medical evacuations

Navarre's plan had supporting precedent. In late 1952, the French had established a base at Na San and, relying on air supply, had been able to inflict a painful defeat on Viet Minh assaulting forces. Navarre's plan, Operation Castor, was fairly straightforward: he would place a major force deep into enemy-held territory and, from there, operate against the Viet Minh communications. This would force the enemy to move against the position and, when it did, French superiority in terms of artillery and firepower would bring victory.

On 20 November 1953, Operation Castor began. An initial force of 1,800 paratroopers was dropped, reaching a total of 2,650 men by nightfall. The drop zone proved to be occupied by enemy troops, and 15 French soldiers were killed. The Viet Minh suffered 115 casualties. A perimeter was set up and a base established. The old Japanese airfield was returned to service using engineers and bulldozers that had been dropped in. A supporting position, complete with its own airstrip, was also set up four and a half miles to the south, codenamed Isabelle. (All the positions were given French female names.)

Bomber squadrons

The garrison grew to about 15,000 men, supported by ten M-24 Chaffee tanks, a large number of artillery pieces, six F8F Bearcat fighters, a helicopter and a number of light observation aircraft. These were supported by the rest of the French Air Force in northern Vietnam, which broadly stood at 40 Bearcats based at Hanoi-Bach Mai and two B-26 bomber squadrons of about 35-40 aircraft. The naval air arm operated a squadron each of fighter-bombers and dive-bombers off the carrier Arromaches in the Gulf of Tonkin.

THE DROP ZONE WAS OCCUPIED BY ENEMY TROOPS, AND 15 FRENCH SOLDIERS WERE KILLED

Serviceability, a shortage of pilots and changeable weather conditions meant that the availability of air support varied hugely during the battle. The ground-air base concept also rested on the provision of heavy artillery support. The artillery commander, Colonel Charles Piroth, had 24 105mm and four 155mm guns, divided between the main base and Isabelle. He was confident his guns would dominate the artillery battle and silence any guns the Viet Minh brought into action.

The Viet Minh's leadership recognised that a major victory over the Expeditionary Force might hasten a French departure from Vietnam. At the very least, it would give the Viet Minh real political advantage in any subsequent negotiations. But Võ Nguyên Giáp's army, tough and experienced as it was, had never captured a fortified position held by more than two companies. Dien Bien Phu and Isabelle were garrisoned by 17 battalions, meaning that victory would require large numbers of troops. Giáp eventually mustered about 50,000 men from four infantry divisions and, crucially, the 351 Heavy Artillery Division, which included numerous 75mm pieces and mortars, as well as 24 105mm howitzers – about which the French knew nothing.

If he had followed convention, Giáp would have placed his guns on the reverse slopes of the hills surrounding Dien Bien Phu. However, this would've exposed them to French air power and might have made counter battery fire more effective. Rather, he dug his guns into casements on the forward slopes, enabling them to fire directly onto the base. This took an extraordinary effort, given that it was undertaken at night and all work had to be camouflaged by dawn. The guns and the assembling army were protected by about a hundred 12.7mm and 20mm pieces, and at least 36 37mm anti-aircraft guns.

The Viet Minh's preparations took time but before dinner on the evening of 12 March 1954, after a wait of almost four months, the garrison commander, Colonel Christian de Castries, finally briefed his senior officers: "Gentlemen, it's going to happen tomorrow at 5pm." The French held two hills to the north – Gabrielle and Beatrice – which, if in enemy hands, would provide a complete view over the camp. These hills came under 105mm artillery fire just after 5pm (as scheduled) on 13 March. Shells soon began to rain down on the airstrip in the central position, too.

Six battalions of Viet Minh leapt from their trenches and swarmed up the slopes towards

OPPOSING FORCES

FRENCH COLONIAL

Ground troops:	15,709 (17 battalions)
Killed or missing:	3,988
Wounded:	4,436 (858 evacuated)
Captured:	10,863
Repatriated:	3,290
Airmen:	128
Killed in action:	78
Wounded:	7
Captured:	43

Aircraft
56 planes destroyed (36 in flight)
2 helicopters destroyed

VIET MINH (ESTIMATED)

Troops:	49,500 (33 battalions)
Support and logistics:	15,000
Total:	64,500
Killed in action:	4,000
Wounded:	9,800

French estimates put Vietnamese KIA and wounded nearer to 21,000

French troops seek cover in trenches

the 500 defending Foreign Legionnaires, hitting the perimeter at about 6.30pm. After desperate hand-to-hand fighting, organised resistance on Beatrice had ceased by 1:15 the following morning. Gabrielle fell two days later.

By this time, a despairing Colonel Piroth had committed suicide. Recognising the importance of the two lost positions, a couple of companies of Legionnaires and a battalion of Thai infantry, supported by six tanks, made an abortive counter-attack on Gabrielle. Holding the two hills allowed the Viet Minh to place anti-aircraft guns much closer to the Dien Bien Phu airfield, further undermining the viability of the airstrip. Elsewhere, Anne-Marie to the west was deemed untenable by the French due to its comparative isolation, and was evacuated on 17 March.

The French Bearcat aircraft left Dien Bien Phu once the shelling began on 13 March. Although the occasional Beaver observation aircraft made an extremely dangerous landing and take-off, the only aircraft making regular landings were Dakota C-47s delivering medical supplies and evacuating casualties. Other supplies were dropped by parachute or just pushed straight out of the back of cargo aircraft coming in low over the camp. After the fall of Anne-Marie, there followed a lull in the fighting, which allowed the French to replenish their stocks of ammunition. However, on 27 March, French aircraft were ordered to carry out their supply drops from above 2,000m due to Viet Minh anti-aircraft fire, which limited the accuracy of the drops.

Defensive battle

The assault on the two forward positions, Gabrielle and Beatrice, had been particularly costly for the Viet Minh. Estimates vary, but there were approximately 5,000 casualties, necessitating a regrouping of attacking forces. While this went on, Giáp completed the encirclement of Dien Bien Phu, cutting it off from Isabelle, although the road connecting the two was reopened by a strong French counter-attack on 21/22 March. There were also some changes in command structure for the French defenders, with paratrooper Lieutenant-Colonel Pierre Langlais becoming de Castries' chief of operations, responsible for the defence of the central position. This was probably less a coup against de Castries – a cavalryman – than a recognition of Langlais' infantry expertise in the midst of what was a positional defensive battle.

Although he had found it hard to cope in the early days of the battle, de Castries recovered and continued to shoulder the responsibility for the day-to-day survival of the camp. There did appear to be a sense of renewed purpose from the defenders and, on 28 March, two paratrooper battalions and a troop of tanks under Major Marcel "Bruno" Bigeard launched a raid on anti-aircraft positions to the west of Dien Bien Phu, destroying five anti-aircraft guns and numerous heavy machine guns, and inflicting heavy casualties on the Viet Minh. Yet such success could not hide the fact that, on the same day, the last casualty evacuation, C-47, landed and was unable to take off – the runway was effectively closed. The following day, the road between the main camp and Isabelle was finally cut. In addition, Giáp was now ready to resume the offensive.

The multiple Dominique and Eliane strongpoints were a line of five hills to the east of the Nam Youm River, which bisected the camp on a north-south line. Attacking these was a ▶

Colonel Christian de Castries, the man who resolved that "We'll fight in Indochina for as long as it's necessary" is seen working over some maps of the Dien Bien Phu area, where he was in command of the French defenders

FRENCH PARATROOPER

This French paratrooper Captain is dressed in a mixture of camouflage patterns. The French received an eclectic mixture of uniforms from French, British and American stocks. He wears a US M1 helmet, his webbing is a mixture of French TAP M1950 belt kit and US Army, and his weapon is a folding stock US M-1A1 carbine, which was popular with French colonial troops.

2 On 21 March, the supporting position of Isabelle is cut off from the main position by a Viet Minh blocking force. A counter-attack reopens the road during the next 24 hours. The link is finally severed on 29 March.
6 The final Viet Minh assault is launched on 1 May. The fighting continues for six days. Resistance finally ceases at around 5.30pm on 7 May.
NAM YUM RIVER
ISABELLE
AIR STRIP

ANNE-MARIE
GABRIELLE
HUGUETTE
FRANCOISE
AIR STRIP
DOMINIQUE
BEATRICE
CLAUDINE
ELIANE
4 After the French defensive success around Eliane 2, in early April Giáp shifts his emphasis to the Huguette positions to the west of the base.
1 On 13 March, the Viet Minh begin their assault on Beatrice and Gabrielle. Gabrielle is captured that night, and Beatrice falls two days later. The whole of Dien Bien Phu is now under communist observation.
5 On 10 April, Colonel Bigeard and 6 Colonial Parachute Battalion, supported by tanks, attack and recapture Eliane 1.
3 The Viet Minh offensive resumes on 30 March with an attack on the Dominique and Eliane positions. Dominique and Eliane 1 fall that night, but the French hold on to Eliane 2.

Great Battles

DIEN BIEN PHU

13 MARCH–7 MAY 1954

COMMUNIST FIGHTER
The Viet Minh soldier in this illustration wears black fatigues, typically sported by communist irregular troops during the Indochina/Vietnam Wars. He wears a brush hat, probably taken from his colonial adversaries, and is armed with a French MAT-49 sub-machine gun.

more daunting proposition than Gabrielle and Beatrice, as none could be captured in isolation – failure to capture them all would leave the attackers exposed to fire from the other peaks.

Amazing action

Success, though, would bring the rest of Dien Bien Phu into close range of the Viet Minh's lighter support weapons, such as their mortars and recoilless rifles. Giáp hoped to take the hills all in one night. He was to be disappointed. Although Dominique 1 and 2 fell on the night of 30 March, the Viet Minh regiment that swept across Dominique 2 and threatened to unlock the whole French position was stopped in its tracks by 4th Battery, 4th Colonial Artillery Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Paul Brunbrouck. His West African gunners fired something like 1,800 shells at point-blank range into their attackers, supported by some artillery men acting as infantry, and a quad 12.7mm anti-aircraft gun mounted by the airfield. Their amazing action saved Dien Bien Phu that night. Eliane 1 was lost, but Major Bigeard's Colonial Paratroopers held on to the southernmost hill, Eliane 2. The French counter-attacked and regained their lost positions the following morning, but had no-one to reinforce them. The paratroopers were reluctantly ordered to withdraw. The Viet Minh resumed their offensive that night but still failed to take Eliane 2.

In light of this, Giáp shifted his emphasis to the north, chipping away at Huguette 6 and 7. Huguette 7, somewhat isolated to the north west, was abandoned by the French on 2 April. In fact, across Dien Bien Phu, the defenders were being steadily worn down. Many of the paratrooper battalions were down to half strength, and the reinforcements being dropped in were not making up the deficit.

The fighting for the eastern hills petered out on 5 April. Giáp again paused to consider his next move, given the French defensive success around Eliane 2, and dismissed a number of commanders who had failed there. He later described the subsequent week or so of Viet Minh operations as "nibbling away", through entrenching and mining. Bigeard, however, had decided that Eliane 1 could not remain in Viet Minh hands and, on 10 April, it was recaptured by 6 Colonial Parachute Battalion, supported by tanks. The French held on in spite of continuing counter-attacks.

THE NETWORK OF VIET MINH TRENCHES INCREASINGLY STRANGLED DIEN BIEN PHU

Yet the network of Viet Minh trenches increasingly strangled Dien Bien Phu, despite French raids and occasional successes, such as at Eliane 1. The increasingly isolated Huguette 6 at the northern end of the runway was abandoned on 17 April, provoking serious fighting across the airfield, which had been cut off by Viet Minh trenches. A force was sent in to enable its French defenders to pull out. Huguette 1 fell on 23 April after the Viet Minh managed to tunnel their way into the position. Their commanders noted with satisfaction the success of their new siege-warfare techniques.

French POWs being marched away. Some 10,800 men fell into Viet Minh hands, and only half of them survived captivity

The 6 Foreign Legion Paratrooper Battalion's counter-attack failed to make an impact, and serious casualties were suffered. It was to be the last major counter-attack launched by the defenders. By the end of April, some 4,900 French infantry guarded around 2,100 wounded, along with 4,000 non-infantry combatants and service troops living in appalling conditions with no hope of relief. Yet, incredibly, morale held

For the Viet Minh, the issue was less clear cut. Giáp's infantry had suffered 50 per cent casualties in just six weeks, and many of his units were at the end of their reserves of strength. So Giáp paused once again before launching the third wave of assaults. He had assembled around 50,000 men and intended to take the Elianes and western Huguettes between 1 and 5 May. He would then pause to bring up supporting weaponry before launching the final assault on the central positions on 10 May. The attack opened in the late afternoon of 1 May with a massive bombardment.

The final assault

The infantry assault against the Elianes and Dominique 3 on the east perimeter began as darkness fell. There were also attacks on the Huguettes and the isolated Isabelle to the south. Eliane 1, which had changed hands numerous times by that point, fell for the final time that night, but the successful Viet Minh regiment could not maintain its forward moment and was fought to a standstill on the forward slopes of Eliane 4 by its defenders, the 5 Vietnamese Parachute Battalion. Dominique 3 was captured after six hours of hand-to-hand fighting that began once 6 Colonial Paratrooper Battalion's ammunition had run out. There were some defensive successes on the western side, but Huguette 5 was captured by a Viet Minh regiment, which took 90 minutes to overwhelm its platoon of defenders. Lilli 3 fell on 4 May.

The French deployed several US-made M24 Chaffee light tanks during the battle

A French soldier takes cover. He appears to be looking out across the airfield towards the wrecked C-47 transport. There was desperate fighting across the runway in the middle of April

De Castries, now promoted to Brigadier General, and Langlais toured the positions, trying to maintain morale among their men. Piecemeal reinforcements and supplies were parachuted in, and the garrisons' meagre resources were shuffled as the defenders waited for the final assault.

During the late afternoon of 6 May, Viet Minh artillery fire intensified to cover the assembly of their infantry for their final assault. Katushka rocket launchers were deployed for the first time. Eliane 2 was the first position attacked that night and, during the fighting, the Viet Minh exploded a mine underneath the position, but failed to end the resistance of the Colonial Paratroopers defending the hill

The fighting continued until sometime between 5.30am and 6am, when the handful of survivors, their ammunition exhausted, were captured around the command post. Eliane 4, held by a combination of French, Legion and Vietnamese paratroopers, fought on into the next morning. Claudine 5 on the western perimeter fell sometime around 10pm.

A ceasefire is called

Meanwhile, Langlais tried to raise a counter attacking force to retake Eliane 2, but this was stopped as the Viet Minh renewed their assault on the morning of 7 May. A thin line of scratch defenders was all that remained on the east side of the river, and the attackers were now less than 500m from de Castries' command post. He and his commanders discussed and rejected the possibility of a break-out – their remaining men were simply too exhausted. As this discussion was taking place, the Viet Minh were clearing up the east bank of the river. They had enough momentum to dispense with a planned pause, since the defenders were on the brink of collapse. Indeed, between 2pm and 5.30pm, the fighting petered out and a ceasefire came into effect at 5.30pm. After 56 days, Dien Bien Phu's agony was over and, at 5.40pm, a red Viet Minh flag was raised above de Castries' headquarters. Later that evening, the defenders of Isabelle attempted a largely abortive break-out, although about 70 men were able to reach friendly territory.

Accurate casualty figures are impossible to come by but, of the slightly more than 15,000 French and colonial troops who fought in the battle, around 1,700 lost their lives, a similar number were reported missing, 1,200 deserted and 4,400 were wounded. Around 10,800 men fell into Viet Minh hands, and although they remained in captivity for just four months, only a third would return home, so the ceasefire did not immediately end the defenders' suffering. The Viet Minh reported its death toll as 4,000 but estimates put this number as high as 12,000.

However, the fall of Dien Bien Phu was more than a battlefield setback for the French – it signalled the end of their rule in Indochina. The Geneva Conference opened on 8 May, the day after their humiliation. The result of the talks was a French withdrawal from Indochina and the division of Vietnam into two states – the north under Ho Chi Minh's communists, and the south under Emperor Bao Dai, supported by the French and subsequently the United States. The latter, of course, would eventually be sucked into a conflict similar to the French.

This feature is an edited extract from the book *Battles That Changed History*, published by Amber Books, RRP £24.99. It is available from www.amberbooks.co.uk

Military MILESTONES

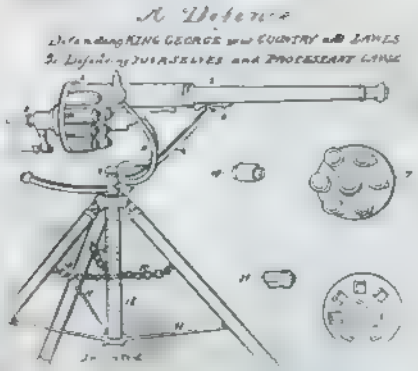
MACHINE GUNS

The rat-a-tat of a machine gun is one of the most intimidating sounds in modern warfare, as these weapons are **capable of causing multiple deaths in seconds**. Steve Jarratt looks back at some of the most important models...

1718 PUCKLE GUN

The forerunner to the machine gun was devised by British inventor James Puckle. Patented as the "Defence Gun", it was generally referred to as the Puckle Gun and originally designed for use on ships to repel boarders. It was based on a flintlock system, with a three-foot barrel and a hand-cranked cylinder pre-loaded with 11 charges. Able to fire up to 63 shots in seven minutes, it was three times faster than a trained fusilier, and even came with two variants: one firing round bullets for use against Christians, and one firing more-damaging square bullets for use against Muslim Turks and other infidels.

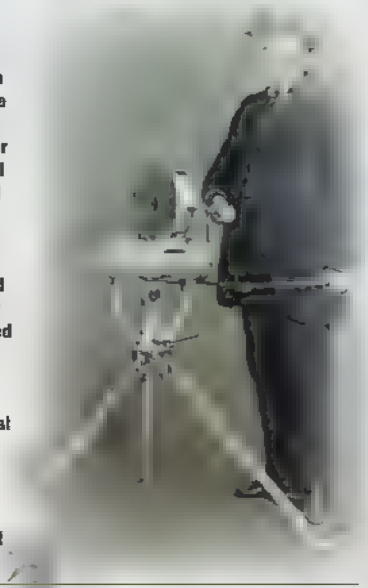
Sadly, gunsmiths of the time were unable to reproduce the gun's complex components. So the British military never signed an order for mass production, and Puckle's inspired project ended not with multiple bangs but with one single whimper.



1862 GATLING GUN

Rather than employ a single barrel, as with Agar's device, Dr Richard Gatling's machine gun had multiple rotating barrels, each with its own firing mechanism. The operator simply cranked the gun and, as each barrel revolved into place, it was fed with a metal cartridge under gravity via a hopper or magazine. Not only could the Gatling fire quickly, at some 200 rounds per minute, it could do so continuously, was easy to load and didn't require a trained operator. Early guns deployed in the American Civil War used six barrels, but later variants had up to ten.

The weapon was used successfully in many conflicts, including the Peru-Chile War of the Pacific, during European colonial expansion in Africa, by Russia against the nomads of central Asia, and by the US Army during the Spanish-American War. It continued in service around the world well into the 20th Century, until it was replaced by recoil- or gas-operated machine guns.



Mary Evans

1700 1710 1720 1730 1740 1750 1760 1770 1780 1790 1800 1810 1820

1851 MITRAILLEUSE

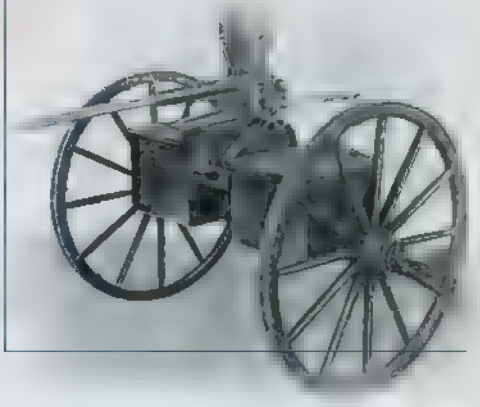
Another precursor to the machine gun was the "volley gun", a weapon with multiple barrels, which fired in rapid succession. The first example – the *mitrailleuse* – was invented by Belgian Army Captain Toussaint-Henry-Joseph Fafchamps. It had 50 rifled barrels, which were loaded with a single block of ammunition before a crank turned to fire each barrel in succession.

The concept was refined in the ensuing years, first with the 37-barrel Montigny *mitrailleuse*, then with the Reffye version, which could fire 125 rounds per minute. The French Army used the latter in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. However, a lack of training and slow range-finding meant that it proved largely ineffective, and it's cited as a reason why European armies were slower to adopt machine guns than their US counterparts.

1861 AGAR GUN

Major conflicts tend to drive advances in technology, and the American Civil War was a hotbed of new ideas – one of which was the Agar machine gun, developed by Wilson Agar. Nicknamed the "Coffee Mill Gun" due to the hand-cranked mechanism's resemblance to a coffee grinder, it was able to fire .58-calibre cartridges at a rate of 120 rounds per minute.

When it was first demonstrated, President Abraham Lincoln was so impressed that he bought all ten units at a vast cost of $13,000. More than 60 were deployed during the war, but they were found to be too costly in terms of ammunition, and never found widespread use. Problems with overheating and jamming, plus a range of just 800 yards, meant that they soon fell out of favour.



Mary Evans

1884 MAXIM GUN

The first automatic machine gun was the recoil-operated weapon invented by Sir Hiram Stevens Maxim, an American who moved to England in the 1880s. As a child, Maxim had been knocked over by the recoil from a rifle, and this inspired him to use the energy to drive the gun's operation. The spent cartridge was ejected and a new one loaded automatically, which removed the need for hand-cranking or manual loading. However, the gun's high rate of fire – some 600 rounds per minute – necessitated water-cooling, which made it heavier and more awkward than competing weapons, and it required a team of men to operate.

The Maxim saw heavy use during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1906, but by the First World War it had mostly been replaced by the Vickers machine gun.

1901 HOTCHKISS M1909 BENET-MERCIE MACHINE GUN

With the effectiveness of the machine gun now proven, the next step was to create a lighter, more mobile version for use by frontline troops. The first example of this was a weapon developed by Benjamin Hotchkiss, a US gunsmith who'd moved to France and set up his own factory, Hotchkiss et Cie. In 1872, he developed a revolving-barrel machine gun, known as the Hotchkiss Gun, which saw use in the Franco-Prussian War.

Following Hotchkiss' death, in 1901 the company's designers Lawrence Benet and Henri Mercie built a gas-operated, air-cooled light machine gun, which could fire the standard 8mm Lebel cartridge at 400 rounds per minute. The French Army adopted the weapon in 1909 (hence the designation), and a .303 variant was made for Britain by Enfield. The M1909 saw extensive use throughout the First World War.

1911 LEWIS GUN

Despite being developed by US Army Colonel Isaac Newton Lewis in 1911, the Lewis Gun was initially ignored by the US military, so its inventor set off for Europe. He set up the Armes Automatique Lewis company in Liege, and produced his weapon for the Belgian Army. Then, in 1914, the Birmingham Small Arms Company produced the Lewis Gun under licence.

This gas-operated machine gun could fire at up to 600 rounds per minute, and was easily identifiable by its large aluminium barrel shroud and drum magazine (although shroud-less units seemed to operate perfectly well without one). The .303-calibre model was adopted by the British during the First World War, mainly for use on vehicles and aircraft – the Lewis was the first machine gun to be fired from an aeroplane. Although supplanted by the Bren Gun for infantry duties in the Second World War, the Lewis Gun remained in service with British forces until 1946.

1933 BROWNING M2

Developed by US ordnance designer John Browning towards the end of the First World War, the M2 was a heavy, .50-calibre machine gun intended for use against infantry, lightly armoured vehicles and aircraft. Design of the gun began in 1917 at the request of the US military, which needed a heavy-calibre weapon to compete with Germany's new Junkers J I armoured plane. The resulting short-recoil gun was water-cooled and belt-fed, and capable of firing 600 rounds per minute – although later variants increased this to 1,200.

The gun debuted as the M1921 in 1933, long after the war had finished, and was refined over the next decade with an air-cooled model for use on aircraft. The M2 was heavily deployed during the Second World War and served in a multitude of roles – as infantry support on tanks, fixed-mount armament on fighter planes and anti-aircraft measures on naval vessels. The Browning M2 is still in service around the world today, and is the longest-serving weapon in the US arsenal.

1907 FSM CHAUCHAT

At 12kg, the Hotchkiss M1909 was still too bulky to be used by assault troops, so an even lighter weapon was needed: the Fusil Mitrailleur Modele 1915 CSRG, the result of a project led by French Colonel Louis Chauchat, and known colloquially as the FSM Chauchat. This light machine gun operated on the principles set down in patents by US firearms designer John Browning, using a long-recoil, gas-assist system to fire at up to 250 rounds per minute.

At just over 9kg, the FSM Chauchat could be operated by one man plus an assistant, and – like the Hotchkiss M1909 – used 8mm Lebel rounds. It could also be rapidly mass-produced, and 262,000 were manufactured between 1916 and 1918. However, its general low quality meant that it was unreliable and prone to jamming. The .30-06 variant of the Chauchat made for use by the US Army in the First World War was made to such a poor standard that the guns were often simply discarded in favour of the French model.

1929 MASCHINENGEWEHR 34

Developed during the inter-war years, the MG 34 was a general-purpose machine gun and, at the time of its introduction in 1936, was regarded as the most advanced weapon of its type in the world. At 12kg, it was light enough to be carried but, with a rate of fire of up to 900 rounds per minute, its effects were devastating. It was also available in both offensive and defensive formats – the former employed a 50- or 75-round drum of ammunition, while the latter could be belt-fed. It was also the first "universal" machine gun, capable of being used by infantry, on tanks or on anti-aircraft duties, and was the standard machine gun of the German Navy.

The MG 34 first saw service with German troops supporting the Nationalists in the Spanish Civil War, and it was then used throughout the Second World War. However, its precision engineering meant that it could never be manufactured in large enough numbers to satisfy the demands of the German Army.

Thousands of jubilant Parisians mill around the aptly named Arc de Triomphe following the liberation of the city, 26 August 1944

FROM THE History of War

The ROAD to PARIS

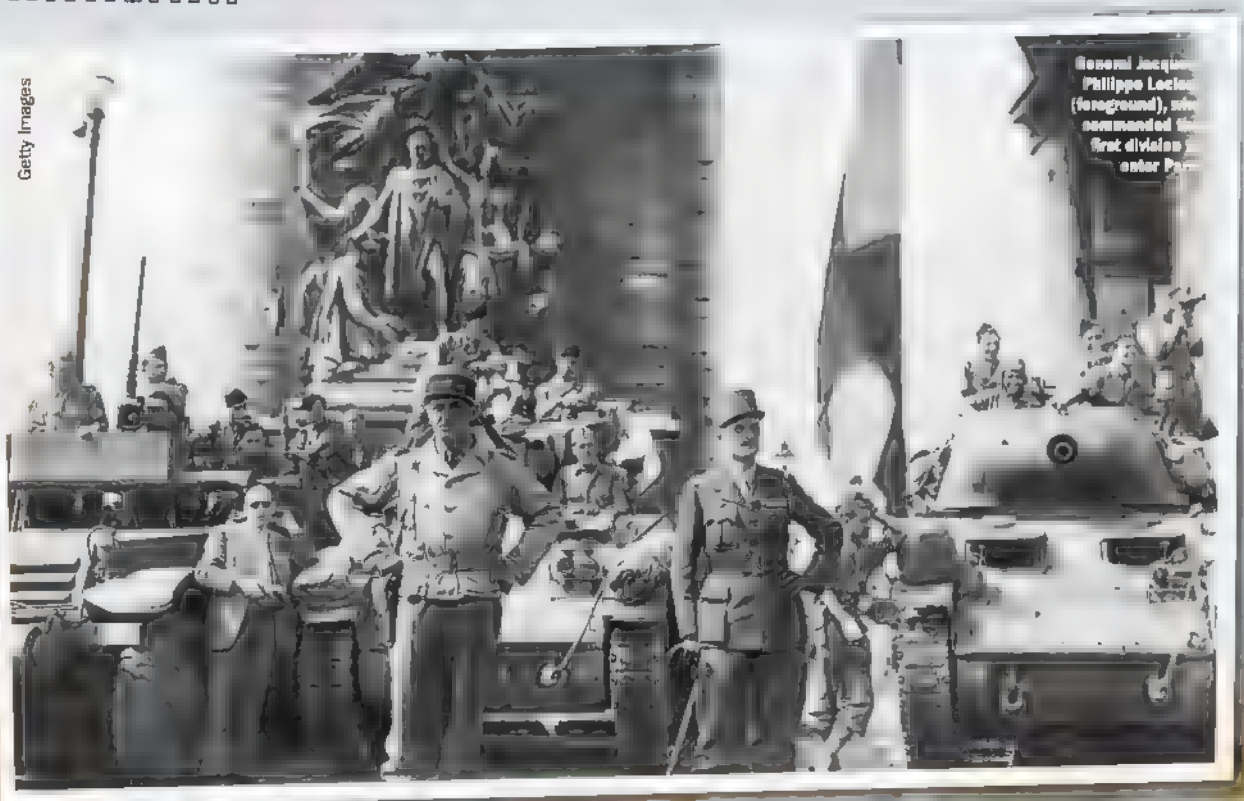
Second World War: Just over two months after Allied forces landed on the beaches of Normandy, they descended on Paris to force the German occupiers into submission. Throughout the campaign in France, a group of courageous BBC radio journalists embedded with Allied troops sent regular dispatches to listeners back home in Britain. Here, *History of War* publishes some of those reports, which describe the last stages of the campaign, the moment when the French capital was liberated after four years under Nazi control, and the jubilant mood among the Parisian people…

▼ "A GIANT GARDEN OF LOVELY, VIVID FLOWERS"

While the closing of the Falaise Gap and the virtual annihilation of the German Seventh Army were on the point of completion, a fresh Allied invasion was reported. Landing at points on a 100-mile front between Marseilles and Nice, US, British and French forces of Mediterranean Command added a new complication to German difficulties in the west. Churchill's presence in Italy had increased German suspicions that a landing in southern France was imminent, but the enemy was unable to hold off the Allies, who swept through the coastal defences and pushed inland:

"I flew in an observation plane alongside a great fleet of troop-carrier planes, each towing a glider. Ahead of us, at dawn, another fleet of carriers had [taken] hundreds of parachute troops, British and American, and dropped them inland of our beachhead, and before the seaborne force landed. Our air armada was a tremendous sight – tow-planes and gliders, four abreast in one great procession a mile or two long, flying at 2,000 feet high in the blue sky, with fighter cover glinting and whirling overhead, and the placid blue sea below. We sighted the coast of France and braced ourselves; but no, we crossed a jagged, rocky coast of twisting corniche roads and red-roofed villas, and flew on, on and on, over land, over occupied southern France, and there still wasn't any shot fired – no flak, no enemy fighters. Over the hills we went, and then down into a valley with fertile fields and rolling farmlands. It wasn't merely that there was no shooting. There wasn't a solitary sign of life – not a person, not a vehicle was to be seen down below. And I could see it all very clearly in the hot, brilliant sunshine. Moreover, our plane went wheeling down provocatively to not much more than 600 feet; and still not a thing happened – not a gun, not a movement. That, at any rate, was our party's experience. It was uncanny. It was fine Just some smoke coming up from near one village, and some more smoke from near what looked like a barracks. And then, as we flew... we saw that spot where they had come and dropped before us. For there were hundreds of bright-coloured, discarded parachutes lying on fields and hedges and tree tops below us; all well together – excellent drops they must have been. Those parachutes, lots and lots of them, made the country look like a giant garden of lovely, vivid flowers.

"And then, one after the other, our gliders slipped their tow-ropes, and slid and circled down to make excellent landings. I myself saw only one crash. It was most skilful – I saw fourteen gliders land beautifully, close together, in one not too big field, half grass, half ploughed. They raised just a dust cloud, and then they stopped and out came men. And we, we wheeled and back we went, our plane and the tow-planes, and still unopposed, back over the coast, a Riviera coast, that was lovely, beautiful there in the hot sun. Still not a shot, still not a soul to be seen, not a vehicle, not a movement. This is a great day, a new assault on the enemy in great strength. Great things are happening in the area between Nice and Marseilles."



▼ "HE COULD HAVE LIT THEIR CIGARETTES FOR THEM"

Coastal resistance in the landing area was quickly confined to the two great ports of Marseilles and Toulon. While appropriate units were detached to deal with them, General Alexander Patch's main force [US Seventh Army] drove swiftly up the Rhone Valley. There was never any question of manoeuvring for a battle in the Normandy style: having failed to stop the landings, and conscious of a disastrous defeat in the north, the Germans pulled out at once. [The German 19th Army on the Riviera coast, together with the First Army on the Biscay coast, formed Army Group G under General Johannes Blaskowitz.]

After four years of occupation, France was on the eve of liberation. The southern naval bases were beleaguered, and the enemy's grasp of Lyons was being challenged. What remained of Army Group B was in flight towards the Seine. The Atlantic U-boat bases were isolated [Lorient, St-Nazaire and La Rochelle remained in German hands until the end of the war], and Allied patrols – heading for Paris – had reached Versailles. Spontaneous risings by the Maquis added to the confusion already caused by the collapse of German communications and the "blackout" on news of General George Patton's tanks. In some districts, all semblance of a coherent "front" dissolved in a general mêlée – to the consternation, at times, of both sides. There was one occasion when two petrol-supply columns met on a lonely road: one was German, the other American, and no combat troops were attached to either. Both sides, in sudden surprise, stepped on the gas and whizzed past each other at full speed. On another occasion, two American war correspondents, Thomas Treanor and Donald Grant, were sleeping in a French village when a German tank column drove in:

German prisoners of war are marched through the streets of Paris by French police

[illegible]

I couldn't catch the words, but at first I thought it was a Frenchman. In a moment, another voice just a few feet from the window called out roughly, 'Ich will schlafen.' My knowledge of German is limited, but [illegible] to sleep in my bed. It was a miserable thought. It was the closest I have ever been to the enemy. Grant [illegible] open. We could either lie low or we could go out the back door and cut across the fields. Grant went into the old woman's room and woke her to ask her advice. He probably speaks the most atrocious French in all the world, and the woman was so old that she was quite deaf. His whispers sounded like escaping steam, and I could hear the old woman saying in a voice like a bullfrog, 'What, what?' Finally, she said, 'Ah, you want a light.' Grant almost screamed in his next whisper, 'No, no, no, no want light, it's the Boches, Boches.' 'Ah, the Boches,' she said. 'No, they have gone since yesterday.' He gave up trying with the old woman and, meanwhile, outside the Germans were having a quarrel about which way to go. They were yelling at one another in irritated voices. One commander jumped out of his tank and ran a few yards to the corner, where he switched a flashlight on the road sign. Then he ran back. One man roamed around in our garden just below my window, where I had planned to jump to escape in case [illegible] the rest of the night. In the morning, the French were back in the town, and one messenger said that altogether they had knocked out nine of the German tanks. We went down the road and found in one place at least two of the knocked-out tanks, burning and smoking."

[illegible]

▼ "IT'S CLEAR THAT WE ARE SEEING THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE GERMAN ARMY"

The Germans were on the run. That was the one clear fact that emerged from the rumours and delayed reports. And now, all eyes turned to Paris. How near were the Americans? What was happening inside the city?

Getty Images

[redacted]
[redacted] of the SS or armoured divisions, who are willing to fight to the last man. They are moving here and there all over this area, trying to coalesce into strong fighting forces. But most of the Germans are glad to be captured.

"Here in the blue, almost in the outskirts of Paris, no one knows what's happening. The only way we can find [redacted] empty roads and risking being shot at. Sometimes, we reach an American spearhead and find them in hot [redacted] yesterday, we didn't hear a shot; but back in Chartres last night, there was a small fight in the streets just [redacted]

▼ "THERE'S AN AIR OF FESTIVITY IN THE MIDST OF GREAT EFFICIENCY AND COURAGE"

On 23 August, General Marie-Pierre Koenig, Commander-in-Chief of the French Forces of the Interior, announced the liberation of Paris as the result of a general uprising. After four days of fighting, the German garrison had agreed to an armistice that would allow them to withdraw, and would prevent further bloodshed in the city. The first great rejoicings that followed this announcement were cut short, however, when an appeal from the Parisians to General Omar Bradley for reinforcements revealed that the Germans had renewed the fighting. Appropriately, it was the French Second Armoured Division, under General Jacques-Philippe Leclerc, that broke through the remaining enemy defences in the western outskirts, and helped to complete the task that the Parisians had begun. The presence in France of Leclerc's division had only just been revealed. They had travelled from Avranches to Alençon in three and a half days. From Le Mans onwards, they fought the German Ninth Panzer Division: in the first three days, the French killed 2,000 and took over 4,000 prisoners. The Ninth Panzer Division, which had already been mauled in previous fighting, was now so battered that it had to be rebuilt before it could fight again:

[redacted] there are regiments from [Henri] Giraud's troops. There's a naval regiment, who now fight on land as tank [redacted] cavalry. They've been equipped by the Americans, and now that they fight as a part of the American army, [redacted] Some of the men jumped overboard and swam ashore when they found there was a delay.

"Alençon was the first town to be liberated by the division, and at 4.30 in the morning, the General and a [redacted] was behind the other. The Germans opened fire, without hurting any of the French. The French replied, killed [redacted]

[redacted] the main street was filled with the sound of their singing and the cheering of the civilians. German resistance was fairly stiff. The French had to fight hard in the woods and fields, and they suffered losses. But their spirit was, and is, tremendous. There's an air of festivity in the midst of great efficiency and courage. When a tank [redacted]

▼ "THESE ARE THE LAST JERKS OF THE BEAST RECEIVING THE MORTAL BLOW"

In the early morning of 25 August, General Leclerc's division, approaching through Meudon, entered Paris by the Porte Châtillon and moved down the Boulevard Brune towards the Porte d'Orléans. From Paris radio – which was now in the hands of the FFI – came the first description of Leclerc's triumphant entry into the city:

[illegible]
[illegible] children wave French and Allied flags, shouting 'Vive la France! Vive de Gaulle!' Towards nine o'clock, a small detachment of Leclerc's division passed through the Boulevard St Germain, escorting about fifty prisoners. They moved to the Place de la Concorde, where the Germans are holding a centre of resistance. Shooting continues in the streets of Paris, while Allied troops arriving in greater numbers fight side by side with the FFI and the people of Paris. French and Allied flags are appearing at all the windows, and everyone is singing the Marseillaise."

[illegible]
"From the Porte d'Italie to the Ile de la Cité, Leclerc's units have had a delirious welcome. Men, women and children literally rushed the tanks, shouting with joy – joy which, for four years and two months, had been suppressed. But it wasn't the triumphal parade of which some of us had dreamt. The first Allied detachment found a Paris in full battle – a Paris which had to carry out a definite mission to occupy the Prefecture of Police and the Hôtel de Ville, and to liquidate several German tanks which still move about in the area. This mission they are accomplishing from the Hôtel de Ville.

"From where I am speaking to you, I can hear the explosions of shells and the spatter of machine-guns: Boche machine-guns, machine-guns of the regular army, and the machine-guns of the FFI. Last night, a burst of bullets swept the hall of the Hôtel de Ville. Four persons were killed, and since then machine-gunning has never ceased. The Germans set fire to the Navy Ministry and the Hôtel Crillon, and the sky is ablaze in the direction of Neuilly and Vincennes. These are the last jerks of the beast receiving the mortal blow."
[illegible]

Gendarmes, soldiers and resistance fighters escort German prisoners through crowds of celebrating Parisians

Getty Images

▼ "NOTHING THE NAZIS HAVE DONE HAS PENETRATED INTO THE SPIRIT OF THIS CITY"

There were still snipers, suicide squads and rearguard parties to be cleared up, but the liberation of Paris was assured. And for a Briton in the city, it was an overwhelming experience, as these two journalists attested:

[redacted]

"They began flocking in from the suburbs on foot or on bicycles as early as seven o'clock. Great droves of them wheeled through the Place de la Concorde and away up the Champs Elysées – shimmering and beautiful in the autumn sun – and away to the Arc de Triomphe, to the tomb of France's Unknown Warrior... Boulevard cafés began to reopen and to do a thriving trade, and on every street corner hawkers were peddling red, white and blue favours. But even they'd got the Bank Holiday feeling. If you didn't buy a favour, they just thrusted one in your jacket and wrung your hand if you happened to be British or American. In fact, anybody in khaki walking through the streets of Paris today moved in a state of perpetual but rather pleasant embarrassment. You were liable any moment to be pounced on, pressed to some matronly bosom, and then passed round the whole family from Papa to little Réne – and even if you escaped those heartfelt embraces, you stood a jolly good chance of suffering from a sprained wrist before you'd gone far from the doors of the hotel."

[redacted]

[redacted]

"Paris is still Paris. Her heart is still warm and young and gay. Nothing the Nazis have done has penetrated into the spirit of this city. There are bicycles in the streets instead of taxis, but they only add to the charm of the picture, because many of them are ridden by girls in summer dresses. Nothing saucy about the dresses; you see very few women who are chic in the Rue du Louvre tradition, but every one of them there is smart, and every one of them has that old "je ne sais quoi", that certain something that sets them aside...

"I can't stay at my typewriter. I can't stay off my balcony, away from the spectacle of all the delight that's outside. Words can't describe Paris today. You need music for it. Some tune that is a cross between the spine-tingling Marseillaise, the rollicking roll of "Turkey in the Straw" and the rhythm of the Brazilian samba. The whole set is a jam session – I can't write it for you; I can only suggest it as the best image of Paris today."

[redacted]

Parisian men and children salute the Allied tanks as they patrol the city

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HISTORY of WAR

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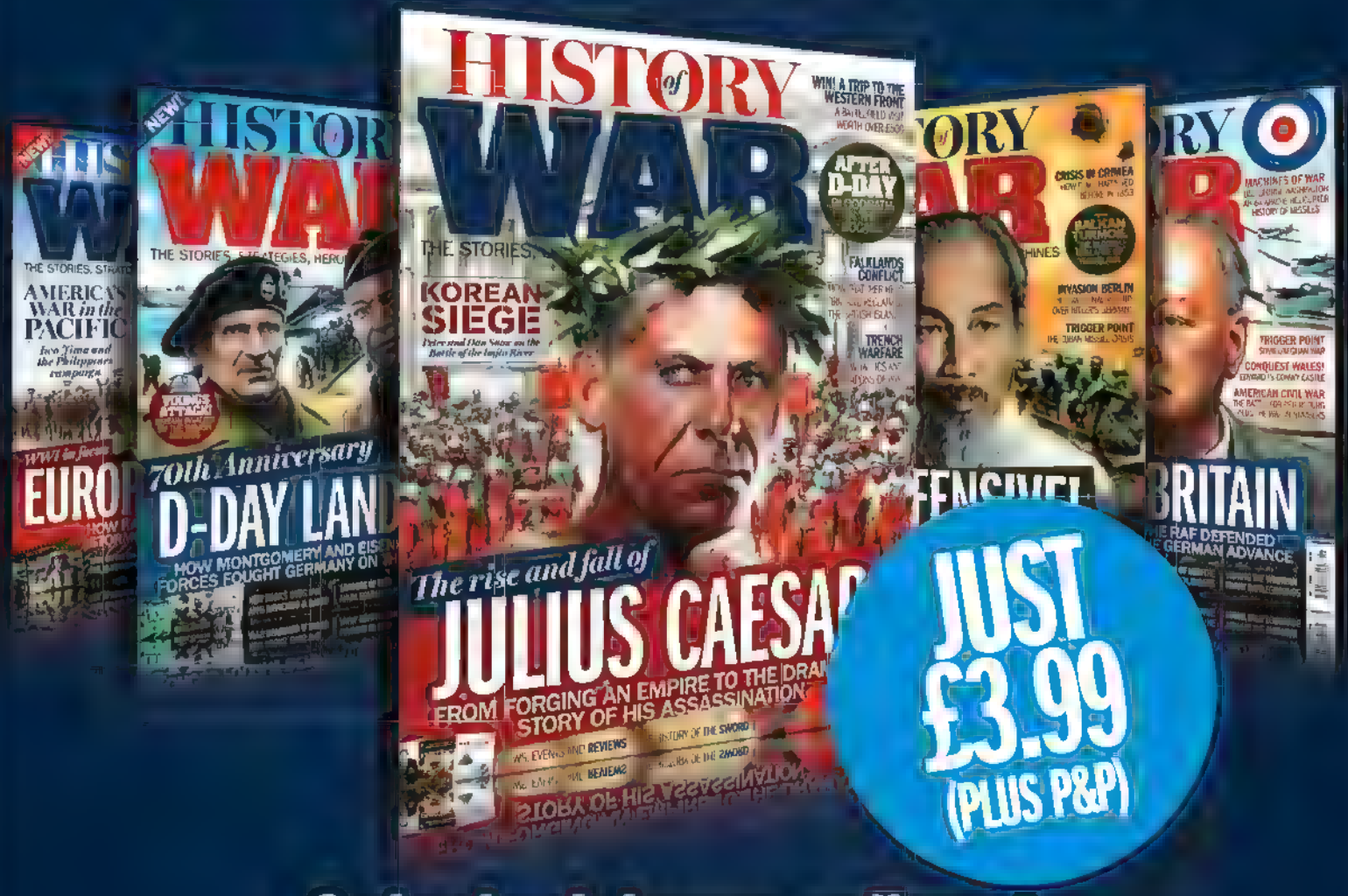

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Back to the past

UNDER AFRICAN SKIES

Anglo-Zulu and Second Boer Wars: This month's battlefield visit takes us on a journey into a world of redcoats, spear-wielding warriors and rugged adventurers. Nick Soldinger looks beyond the legends, to discover the truth about Britain's colonial legacy in South Africa

A BAND OF COURAGEOUS, BAYONET thrusting redcoats behind biscuit tin walls fighting off thousands of fearsome Zulu warriors... Most of us are familiar with this image from the classic 1964 war film *Zulu*, and for many of us this is our sole touchstone when it comes to the story of the British in South Africa during the Victorian era. Which is a shame because, boy, is it a story worth telling.

Why this tale rarely gets told, though, may have something to do with the ignoble greed that drove it, the military disasters it produced and, no doubt, the role it played in bequeathing the world Apartheid. But its marginalisation is, in itself, a tragedy, because not only is there much to learn from the conflicts the British fought, first against the Zulus and later the Boers, but it's an episode as filled with intrigue and tragedy as any in history. Which is why, this month, *History of War* has chosen to tour the battlefields of Natal and Zululand, to discover more about this shadowy corner of Britain's colonial past.

Gold fields

Discover The History Of The Boer and Zulu Wars Of South Africa is a 12-day tour, run by Leger Holidays, that begins in Johannesburg. Although Jo'burg's gold fields were to be the ultimate prize of the Second Boer War, the tour starts this story off at its most famous chapter – the defence of Rorke's Drift, a rural outpost five hours' drive from South Africa's biggest city.

When Britain invaded Zululand – ostensibly to seize territory – on 11 January 1879, Rorke's ▶

The ferocious battle of Rorke's Drift. The site is marked today by mass graves

Drift, on the border with its colony Natal to the south, was the jumping-off point. It was from this tiny mission-post that Lord Chelmsford led his 5,000-strong British column into what was, 135 years ago, deadly Zulu country. Chelmsford, you discover, had little respect for his enemy, describing them as "hopelessly inferior to us". It was an arrogant underestimation. The Zulus had both guts and brains, and his lack of them later would cost a quarter of his men their lives.

As Chelmsford's forces pushed into the wild savannahs, the Zulu army, commanded by their King Cetewayo, played hide-and-seek with them. For nine days, mounted reconnaissance units searched but found nothing to destroy. Eventually, on 20 January, Chelmsford made camp at the foot of Isandlwana – an isolated, narrow peak that looms over the golden grasslands like a tower of black smoke. The next day, his recon units found what he was looking for – Zulus in the hills, 12 miles to the south.

Early the next morning, Chelmsford split his forces. Leaving 1,700 troops to guard his camp, he led the rest to confront the Zulu army. Or, at least, that's what he thought. He was actually chasing shadows. Cetewayo's main army was hidden behind a ridge overlooking his camp to the north-east – all 25,000 of them.

At 11am, that almighty force swept down. Attacking in their classic charging bull formation – a main body flanked by two phalanxes – they smashed into the British position. The redcoats fell back, and the Zulus slaughtered them between tents, upturned wagons and terrified horses. Four hours later, 1,400 of Britain's finest lay dead in the grass. Today, their bell tents are gone. In their place are hundreds of white cairns, mass graves marking where they fell.

THE LINE FELL BACK TO THE HOSPITAL, WHERE THE BUTCHERY CONTINUED INSIDE ITS NARROW CORRIDORS

Ferocious fighting

Back at Rorke's Drift, the 139-man contingent under Lieutenant John Chard learnt about the disaster within hours from a couple of survivors who staggered into camp. And there was even worse news – an army of around 4,500 Zulus was just behind them.

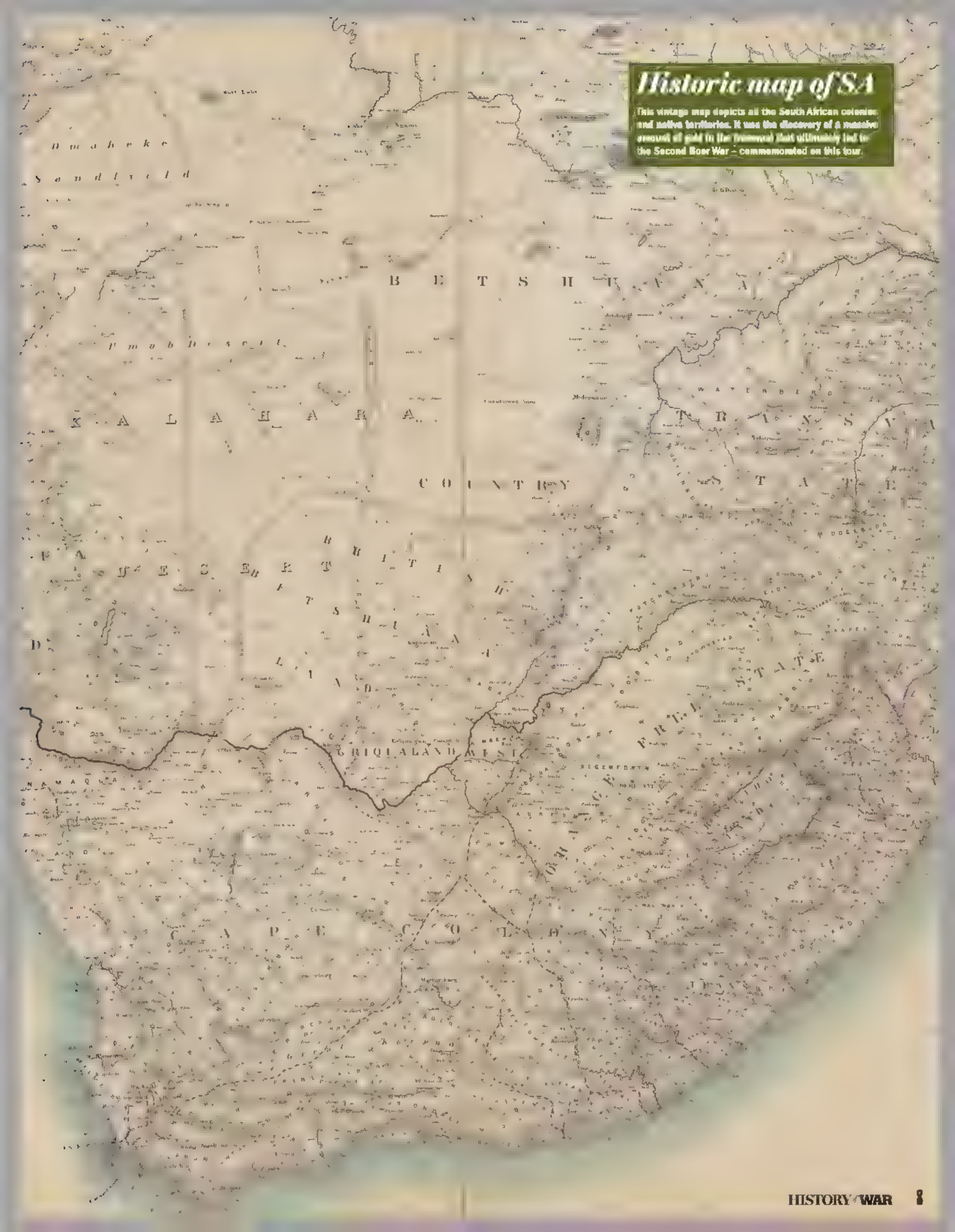
In the rebuilt Rorke's Drift today, lines in the dust mark where Chard, a Royal Engineer, built perimeter defences from metal biscuit boxes and mealie bags. He designed the perimeter to collapse in on itself, with both the mission's hospital and storehouse earmarked as Alamos. The defences were finished just in time.

At 4pm, the fast-moving Zulu force was spotted on the horizon. Half an hour later, it had surrounded Rorke's Drift. Ferocious hand-to-hand fighting followed. Around 6pm, the north perimeter was abandoned. The line fell back to the hospital, where the butchery continued inside its narrow corridors, as doors were barricaded then broken down. The Brits withdrew again. By now, the building was ablaze, and they had to literally burrow their way out through the walls.

By nightfall, Chard's men had been pushed back to their last line of defence around the storehouse. Attacks continued throughout the night, but by sunrise, the only Zulus surrounding ▶

King Cetewayo, who led the Zulu army against the British

Lord Chelmsford and his men underestimated the might and guile of the Zulus



Historic map of SA

This vintage map depicts all the South African colonies and native territories. It was the discovery of a massive amount of gold in the Transvaal that ultimately led to the Second Boer War – commemorated on this tour

the mission were dead ones. The Zulus, not wishing to add to their 1,000 casualties, had gone home. Chard's forces had suffered just 17 fatalities, and 11 Victoria Crosses were awarded to these Imperial heroes – the most ever for a single action. While their heroism remains unquestionable, the British Government's motivation for such generous gonging most definitely is. The slaughter at Isandlwana was a PR disaster. It needed drowning out with something loud, and the noise the War Office made about Rorke's Drift still echoes to this day.

While the political response to Isandlwana was cynical, the military one was surgical. Within six months, the Zulu Nation was destroyed, its capital Ulundi – which the tour also takes in – razed and its King in exile. It would be another 110 years before a black man exerted such power in the region.

Like the US, South Africa's birth began with European colonisation of a vast, unspoilt land, led to wars against the technologically disadvantaged indigenous population, and ended with a fight, by white settlers, for independence from British colonial rule. The second half of the tour explores that war of independence, the Second Boer War of 1899-1902, which more than any other event set South Africa on course for its violent voyage through the 20th Century

THE BRITISH UNDER LORDS ROBERTS AND KITCHENER SYSTEMATICALLY DESTROYED BOER RESISTANCE

It was gold that set the Brits against the Boers. The Transvaal had been set up as an independent Boer republic in the 1850s, but the discovery of vast gold reserves there was to change all of that. By 1899, the gold had made Transvaal the wealthiest country in South Africa, and Britain, from her colonies to the south, plotted annexation. Again, however, the British underestimated their enemy

In December 1899, just over a month into hostilities, they lost around 3,000 men in a series of disastrous engagements known as Black Week, as Boer irregulars advanced south through British Natal, surrounding 12,000 troops at Ladysmith. The tour takes us on an odyssey of these tragic fields and then to the barren hilltop at Spion Kop

At 1,410ft, this was the highest point in the region. Control Spion Kop, it was figured, and you would control the plains below it. It was here on the night of 23 January 1900 that British troops from a relief force sent to break the siege at Ladysmith scrambled up the rocky escarpments By 3.30am, their bayonets had seen off the small Boer force defending the Kop, and, believing they had taken the peak, the Brits began to dig in. As the sun rose, however, the Boers still occupied the higher ground and the Brits realised they had only taken the lower part of the hill. The Boers, mostly hunter-farmers, were sharpshooters, and many of the 1,500 British casualties suffered that day were pinpoint headshots. Despite the losses, though, the British line held and fought back valiantly – watched,

Costumed re-enactors mimic the bloody Anglo-Zulu battles that were fought here in 1879

incidentally, by 24-year-old war correspondent Winston Churchill.

When night fell, the British retreated under the cover of darkness. Ironically, so did the Boers. It was only when they returned the next morning to recover their wounded that they discovered the British had abandoned the hill. Coincidentally, among the Boer ranks that morning was another future world leader – a 29-year-old medic called Mahatma Ghandi.

Ruthless repression

After the calamitous Spion Kop misadventure, the British under Lords Roberts and Kitchener systematically destroyed Boer resistance. First, they captured their cities, then, when the Boer army turned guerrilla, they broke them through a scorched-earth policy and ruthless repression of the civilian population, including the first ever use of concentration camps

By 1902, the war was over but it was to cast long shadows over the country. British tactics had devastated rural communities – both black and white. Rendered destitute, many came to the cities, cramming into poor neighbourhoods in search of work

Radical ideas fester in such environments – a truth not lost on the British, who, in the newly created Union of South Africa, sought to create a fresh national identity for the disaffected Boers, firstly as British South Africans and then, with divide-and-conquer cynicism, as simply "white South Africans".

Says Huw Williams, Marketing Director of Leger Holidays, "This new tour is a wonderful opportunity for military novices and enthusiasts alike to discover the fascinating but brutal history of the wars in South Africa. It's an extraordinary location with unique scenery and culture, and our guides provide historical insight so that guests can indulge their curiosity."

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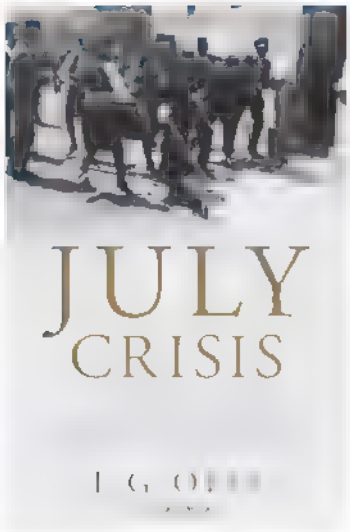
REVIEWS

History Of War casts its eye over the military-based **books, DVDs and games** that may or may not convince you to part with your cash this month

JULY CRISIS: THE WORLD'S DESCENT INTO WAR, SUMMER 1914

T.G. Otte *Cambridge University Press* **RRP £25**

★★★★★



T.G. Otte explains at the beginning of his analysis of the origins of the First World War that, for all the pre-1914 fears of war, most Europeans led a comfortable life and believed the future to be rosy. Compared to previous years, and despite two Balkan conflicts in 1912 and 1913, the relationship between the Great Powers was relatively positive. So what was it about the summer of 1914 that was so different to result in millions of men being sent to their deaths on the battlefields?

The author's main thrust throughout this scholarly book is that it was the failure by the small number of decision-makers, officials and advisors who had access to their leaders' ears, rather than the "alliance system" or "martial culture", that led to the Great War. Their "perceptions, misperceptions and deliberate deceptions" would have after-effects that are still being felt at this very moment, particularly in the Middle East. With careful analysis of sources, Otte aims to increase his audience's awareness of the "frailties of human judgement in politics" and the "importance of strategic thinking".

To put 28 June 1914 – the day when Yugoslav nationalist Gavrilo Princip assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sofie on a visit to Sarajevo – into context, Otte depicts the underlying ethnic problems in the Austro-Hungarian province of Bosnia-Herzegovina. He also briefs us on the radicalisation of Princip and his colleagues, before describing in graphic detail the fateful events of that day, a day Ferdinand knew was risky to visit, it being St Vitus's Day, the 525th anniversary of the Battle of Polje. As events race towards their inevitable dénouement, Otte suggests that had Princip's cyanide pill worked, Serbian military intelligence's link to the killing may have remained undiscovered and the "subsequent crisis might well have played out quite differently".

While most in Europe were shocked by the assassination, many in Vienna were unmoved – including Ferdinand's uncle, Emperor Franz Joseph. He was cautious against military action, had little confidence in Germany's support and feared Russia's intervention. Those around Franz Joseph pressed for war – none more so than Foreign Minister Count Berchtold (had the Emperor struck straightaway, it may have negated the need for an all consuming war), and it's men like him that this book focuses on.

The manoeuvring and counter manoeuvring of ministers from around Europe is far too complex to go into any detail in this short review; it would don't give Otte's intense research its due. But it's the black and white photographs of these nondescript looking men that make the reader realise that those with the power of life and death can look as unassuming as a market town bank clerk.

The book is divided into chapters, each one detailing a few days leading up to the declaration of war on 4 August. Those chapters are then divided into smaller chunks, with newspaper headline-like headings – helping the reader to establish which machinations they're currently caught up in, and giving events a sense of urgency.

Otte sums up his book by saying "none of the decision-makers of 1914 desired a continental war" and that they would have "recoiled" at what was to happen that August. Most, he suggests, were "impaled on their own faulty calculations" to avoid war, but wanting to "extract advantages for themselves" – something that is very similar to the challenges international leaders face today. In this powerful essay, the author makes that point exceedingly well; *July Crisis* deserves to be read. **Simon Lee Green**

Otte suggests that had Princip's cyanide pill worked, the "subsequent crisis may well have played out quite differently"

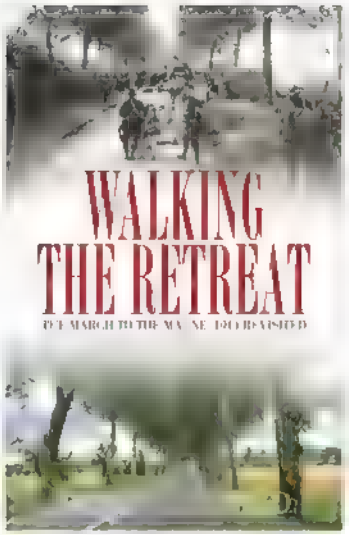
The coffins of the Archduke of Austria Francis Ferdinand and Sophie Chotek, assassinated by the revolutionary Gavrilo Princip, passing through Piazza della Borsa in Trieste, June 1914

Getty Images

WALKING THE RETREAT

Terry Cudbird *Signal Books* **RRP £12.99**

★★★★



There's no shortage of historians happy to pontificate about the events of many lifetimes ago from the comfort of their ivory towers. But Terry Cudbird has employed another passion to undertake a much more hands-on – or, more accurately, boots-on – look at a pivotal period of the Great War.

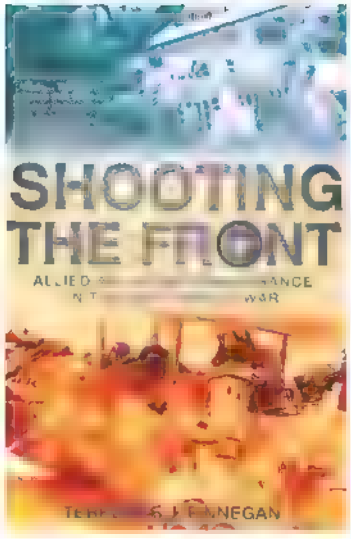
A seasoned long-distance walker, the Cambridge-educated, Oxford-based French History graduate followed his retirement by making a 4,000-mile trip around France, and wrote about it in his 2012 book *Walking The Hexagon*. This follow-up takes a shorter route of 220 miles, but it's a journey in the footsteps of many thousands of Tommies, as it's the route of the British and French armies' temporary retreat from Belgium in the early days of the war, which culminated in the first Battle of the Marne and a successful counter-attack. The route is the exact same one taken by a French Lieutenant in the Fifth Army, and Cudbird also draws on other contemporary accounts.

The writer's evocative descriptions really help to add colour to the terrain, inbetween his detailed account of the retreat, even if there are only a couple of small maps and some black and white snaps to otherwise put us in the picture. By completing the route on foot, he gives us a valuable insight into the challenges faced by half starved, exhausted troops carrying 60lb packs on their backs in blistering heat. And throughout all of this, of course, there's the ever-present knowledge of what lay ahead as a result of the Miracle of the Marne's bitter-sweet victory: the hell of trench warfare. **Johnny Sharp**

SHOOTING THE FRONT

Terrence J Finnegan *The History Press* **RRP £20**

★★★★★



Colonel Terrence J Finnegan has produced an outstanding study that should be on the wish list of anyone interested in the history of aviation, aerial photography and warfare.

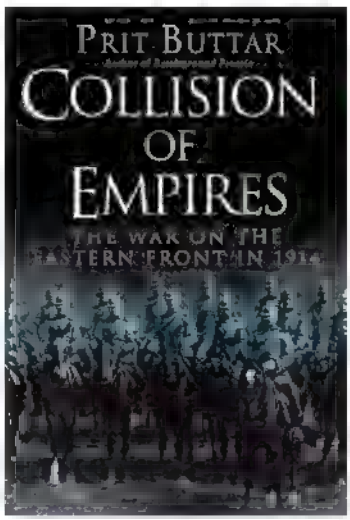
WWI was the first information and intelligence war, and Finnegan believes that the early proponents of aerial reconnaissance laid the foundations for today's unmanned, space-borne analysis of enemy positions. Previously pushed to the sidelines of history in favour of the heroic combat fighters, these brave photographers and pilots now have their vital role recounted in depth in the second edition of Finnegan's book. In it, he highlights the importance of the French, whose commitment to advancing aerial photography so greatly assisted those making tactical decisions on the ground. Finnegan also looks at the roles of Lieutenant-General Sir David Henderson and Major General Sir Frederick Sykes, two Britons whose contribution to aerial reconnaissance and the Royal Flying Corps had such a profound effect on the outcome of the war.

The book is packed with fascinating photographs and maps that enabled the Generals to plan out their campaigns, along with amazing aerial shots of devastated villages and bombing raids, and contemporary photographs and diary extracts of the courageous men who flew into danger to take these images. It's an essential work that never once alienates the more casual reader by using excessive technical jargon, and shows that without the aforementioned heroes, the stalemate of trench warfare could not have been broken. **Simon Lee Green**

COLLISION OF EMPIRES

Prit Buttar *Osprey Publishing* **RRP £20**

★★★★



The words "Eastern Front", when referring to warfare, tend to be indelibly associated with the Second World War, given its well-documented importance in turning the tide of that particular conflict. But, as this scholarly 400-page tome points out, the equivalent areas of concern during the Great War were also hugely significant, if in a different way to the nemesis they turned out to represent for Adolf Hitler some 30 years later.

The Austro-Hungarian empire's aim to bludgeon Serbia into submission during the first year of World War One proved a much tougher task than they'd expected, and, of course, its repercussions would still be felt in Balkan unrest nearly a century later, not to mention having a knock-on effect on Tsarist Russia that would prove literally revolutionary.

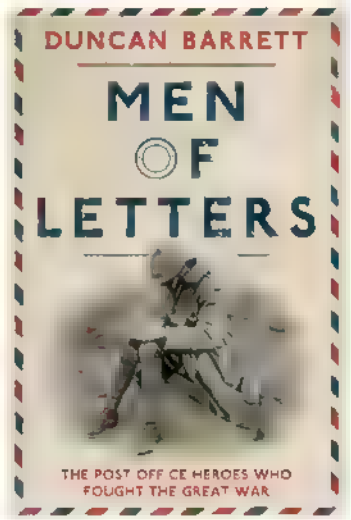
In *Collision Of Empires*, Prit Buttar offers a detailed account of the battles from East Prussia down to the Carpathians, which are covered relatively rarely, even if they often entailed a comparable amount of carnage to their Western Front counterparts. Buttar is often engaging in his analysis of how not particularly well-laid plans were found wanting in the field of battle, resulting in a conflict that would prove little short of catastrophic for all of those involved.

Collision Of Empires isn't a book for your casual reader on the subject – Buttar is totally immersed in his subject matter, and at times has slightly anorakish attention to detail makes the prose drag a little – but for fellow obsessives, this will make for a worthy addition to their Great War library. **Johnny Sharp**

MEN OF LETTERS

Duncan Barrett *AA Publishing* **RRP £8.99**

★★★★★



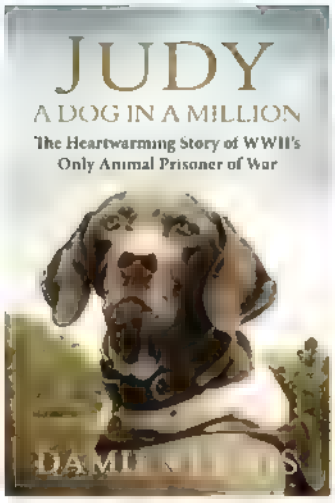
When World War One erupted in the summer of 1914, the call to arms went out to all, no matter what their class or occupation. And among the people who answered that call were around 12,000 members of the British Post Office, who volunteered for action as soldiers under the banner of the Post Office Rifles. Of them, as many as 1,800 would not return from the continent, having fallen fighting the German forces during the 1916 Battle of the Somme; the fierce and terrible attrition that took place on High Wood and, later, at Menin Road Ridge.

Men Of Letters: The Post Office Heroes Who Fought The Great War tells their incredible tale, through a combination of observation by author Duncan Barrett and letters from the postmen themselves, together with diary entries and personal accounts of life on the frontline, living and fighting in the trenches. It is, of course, far from easy reading, though Barrett's book is well researched and amply digestible. The stories within this tome of some 330 pages are both moving and poignant, with the horror of the Great War painted vividly in words.

Where Barrett particularly succeeds is in the manner by which he brings the humanity into an account of mass suffering – he has researched and beautifully articulates the accounts of individuals within an arena of war that spanned hundreds of thousands, indeed millions, of lives. *Men Of Letters: The Post Office Heroes Who Fought The Great War* is an accomplished work, and one that deserves a place in your collection. **Paul Pettengale**

JUDY: A DOG IN A MILLION

Damien Lewis
Quercus **RRP £18.99**



As the title suggests, this is the true story of a brave English pointer dog who survived many of the horrors of the Second World War.

Judy was born in a kennel in Shanghai and purchased with the intention of becoming a mascot for the men of gunship HMS Gnat. Her local name, "Shudi", was anglicised by the men to "Judy" and she quickly became their pet. Judy turned out to be an intelligent and sensitive dog, and was able to hear incoming aircraft, thereby providing the crew with a valuable early-warning system. Despite her best efforts, HMS Gnat was sunk, but some of the crew – including Judy – survived.

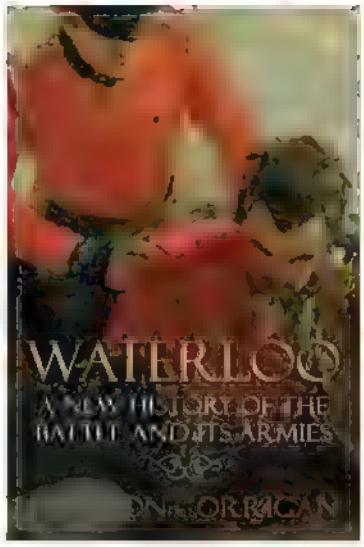
Whilst trekking through the jungle, the remaining men were taken prisoner by the Japanese, and Judy was smuggled into their POW camp. There, she met Leading Aircraftsman Frank Williams, and the two became inseparable. Judy was given the prison number "81A – Medan", thus making history by becoming the only dog to be officially recognised as a prisoner of war. We learn much about daily life in the harrowing camp, where Judy scavenged food to help feed her inmates, and her very presence helped to raise the spirits of the downtrodden men.

Judy endured many more perilous encounters in her life, and was eventually rewarded with the Dickin medal – the animal "VC".

A well-researched and well-written book, and one that's by turns heart-breaking and uplifting, *Judy: A Dog In A Million* never fails to capture the imagination, and reminds us again of the vital role that animals can play in times of conflict. **Hannah Mears**

WATERLOO: A NEW HISTORY OF THE BATTLE AND ITS ARMIES

Gordon Corrigan *Atlantic Books* **RRP £30**



So, what stops this from being just another rehashing of facts and figures about the Battle of Waterloo? After all, Corrigan admits to plundering a wealth of sources (including a 12-volume set that his mother-in-law found in a second-hand bookshop), while the contemporary paintings of the battle could easily be found elsewhere.

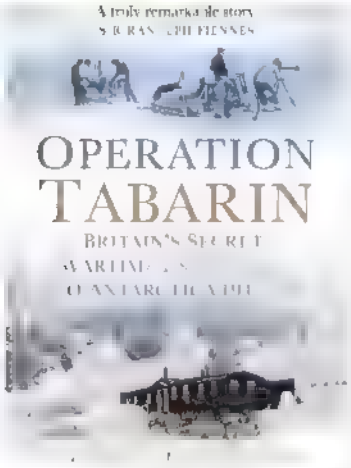
It's Corrigan's frank opinions and driving narrative that give this book its appeal. One can imagine sitting with him in his country-house study while he laments the passing of a time when there weren't any amalgamated army units or political correctness, when France knew its place and England, not Britain, ruled the waves. Corrigan disagrees with a lot of what has been written before; for example, he argues that not all soldiers were fighting for King and country; many were "bad hats" and "hardened criminals... drunkards, thieves, smugglers and forgers" who fought for their mates, officers and regiment. His amusing asides, such as comparing Napoleon's exile on Elba to being reduced from Emperor of Europe to "Mayor of Grimsby", mark Corrigan out from regular historians.

After briefing us on the main players, he gives details of the quagmires of Ligny and Quatre Bras, the attack on Hougoumont, and Waterloo itself: the torrential rain; the flashing steel and vital organs hit by bullets.

Finally, Corrigan puts forward an interesting argument that had Napoleon won, things may not have been as bad as other historians have suggested. **Simon Lee Green**

OPERATION TABARIN

Stephen Haddelsey
The History Press **RRP £18.99**
★★★★★



A staggering tale, this, set on a continent that doesn't immediately spring to mind when one thinks of the Second World War – namely, Antarctica. The region was, however, considered vital by the British, who both feared it might be used by the German and Japanese navies as a refuelling point, and wanted to ward off any Argentinian ideas about seizing the Falkland Islands. So, in 1944, Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered Operation Tabarin (it was named after a Parisian nightclub!) to be put into action.

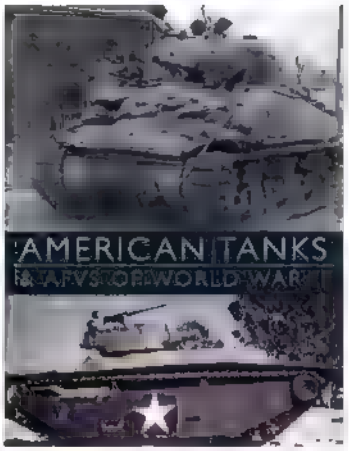
With very little resources available, a small expeditionary force was formed and sent to the Antarctic, where they set up bases. Here, they stayed for the next two years in, mostly, appalling conditions. The story is based largely on accounts of the men who went; on their journals and letters home; and describes in astonishing detail the privations and dangers they faced in what is one of the toughest environments on earth.

When the war finally ended, this outpost of the empire was so remote that the base commanders had to remind London that they were still there and would need recovering before the winter set in and locked them in for another three months.

The book also explores the legacy of Operation Tabarin, including the 1982 Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands, as well as the establishment of the British Antarctic Survey. Full of historical insight, this is a hugely entertaining read that captures a lost world of frozen wastes, endless nights and frostbitten heroes. **Nick Soldinger**

AMERICAN TANKS & AFVS OF WORLD WAR II

Michael Green *Osprey Publishing* **RRP £30**
★★★★



At the end of the First World War, America's Tank Corps – the only unit with any experience of tanks – was disbanded, and it wasn't until the 1939 German invasion of Poland that any real desire to develop newer tanks arose. But it was the invasion of the Soviet Union and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 that really spurred Roosevelt on to step up production – in 1943 alone, 30,000 US tanks were built, whilst during the entire war, Germany and Britain combined assembled 49,163.

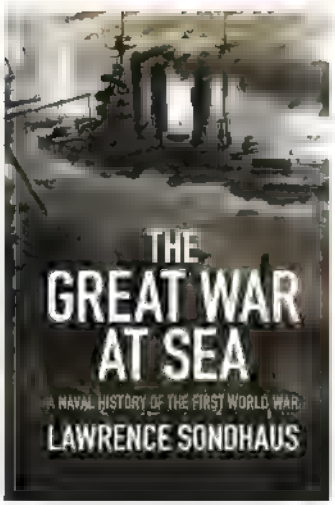
In his weighty book, Michael Green states that, although there were tremendous numbers of tanks and AFVs being produced between 1942 and 1945, the loss rate on the battlefields, particularly during the invasion of France, was down to not building the right tanks for the job. The reason the American tankers prevailed, he claims, is "testament to their courage and adaptability in making the best of a bad situation".

Green journeys from the earliest medium tanks – many of which seem comical to modern eyes – through the development of the M4 series and light tanks, to heavy tanks, M18 tank-destroyers, armoured half-tracks and landing vehicles. For a book that's aimed at such a specialist market, the lack of cross-section diagrams of these machines is perhaps an oversight, but this is a minor quibble. Photographs of these awesome machines in the thick of fighting, along with detailed notes, modern photographs and analysis of what was going on behind the scenes and at production plants, will be more than enough to enthuse those with a penchant for mechanised warfare. **Simon Lee Green**

THE GREAT WAR AT SEA

Lawrence Sondhaus
Cambridge University Press **RRP £25**

★★★★



In this extensively researched book, Lawrence Sondhaus explores how control of the high seas was vital to the chances of victory for both the Entente and the Central Powers during the First World War. For the Allies to be victorious, they had to feed the bloodbath on the Western Front with not just millions of tonnes of supplies but millions of men from both Britain's vast empire and, latterly, the US. For Germany, the key was to stop them.

This exhaustive work investigates not only the major encounters in the North Sea and the Atlantic, but also the naval campaigns that occurred in the Adriatic, Baltic and Mediterranean Seas. It also examines the role technological innovations in firepower, wireless communications and ship design played in some of the most titanic (pardon the pun) sea battles of all time – including, of course, the devastating encounter at Jutland, which cost over 6,000 British lives.

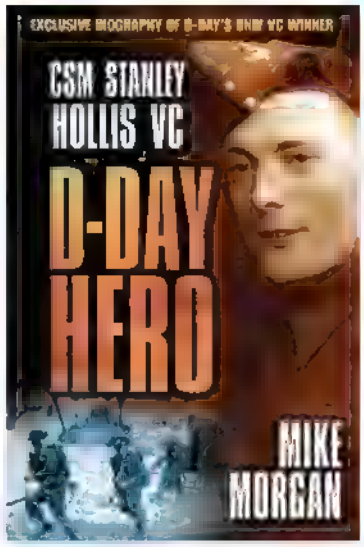
Sondhaus' book also focuses on Germany's decision to engage in unrestricted submarine warfare, and how this gamble – intended ostensibly to strangle supply routes into Britain and mainland Europe – ultimately cost her the war, playing, as it did, a vital role in persuading America to join the Allied cause.

Naval history buffs will particularly enjoy *The Great War At Sea*, not least because it looks at the history of World War One from an almost uniquely maritime perspective, showing not only how no truly global conflict could be waged on the land alone, but also how the war on and under the waves was ultimately the deciding factor. **Nick Soldinger**

D-DAY HERO

Mike Morgan
The History Press **RRP £9.99**

★★★★



That there could be a book written about a singular D-Day hero might seem a little unfair – as you will be acutely aware, there were many thousands of heroes on 6 June 1944 as the Allies stormed the beaches of Normandy to begin their quest of liberating France and defeating the Nazis. The reason Stanley Hollis has been picked out by author Mike Morgan is because he was the only person to be awarded the Victoria Cross during that campaign.

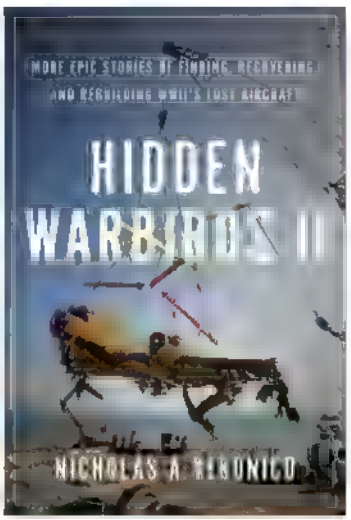
Middlesbrough-born Hollis was a Company Sergeant Major with the Green Howards, one of the assault battalions at Gold Beach. Displaying incredible bravery, he stormed two German pill-boxes, taking dozens of prisoners in the process, before launching an attack on another enemy position later that day. When he discovered that two of his men had been left behind, he risked his own life by returning for them. After being wounded in September 1944, he was sent home to England, where he received the Victoria Cross from King George VI.

Morgan's biography reads like an action-adventure novel at times, but what sets his book apart is the fact that all of the adventures therein actually happened. Being the selfless individual that he was (he died in 1972), Hollis would probably be embarrassed that he has been singled out for special mention when so many others lost their lives. But the release of this book can only serve the greater good, as it rams home the incredible sacrifices that our young soldiers made. **Andy Emerson**

HIDDEN WARBIRDS II

Nicholas A Veronico *Zenith Press* **RRP £20**

★★★★



There's something strangely satisfying about finding a rusty old relic from decades gone by and then uncovering the story behind it (I remember as a child finding an old tin can in my grandfather's garage and then learning that he'd used it for his secret stash of boiled sweets!). And it's even better if you succeed in rejuvenating that object back to something like its former glory. That's the premise behind this book, as aviation historian Nicholas A Veronico reports on the Second World War aircraft – both Allied and Axis – that have turned up in lakes, garages, jungles and swamps, before being salvaged and, in some cases, returned to a flyable condition.

Considering this is actually the second book in Veronico's series, it's remarkable that he's managed to find enough examples to fill what is quite a substantial tome. In this instalment, we hear about the German Dornier Do-17 that was recovered off the coast of Kent; the sole surviving Brewster F3A-1 Corsair and the Junkers Ju-88 that was found in a frozen lake in Norway, among many others. As well as the stories themselves, we get some fascinating colour photographs of both the salvage operations and the restorations, as well as box-outs detailing, where possible, what parts of each aircraft were rescued, and the condition they were in.

If you're not an aviation enthusiast, you might be inclined to give this book a swerve but, in doing so, you'll be missing out on a riveting read that's as much a suspense-packed page-turner as it is a book about planes. Now, are you sure there isn't an old Spitfire hiding in your garden? **Paul Dimery**

THE D-DAY KIT BAG

Martin Robson
Conway **RRP £16.99**

★★★★★

When you call a book the type to "dip in and out of", it sounds faintly insulting. We inevitably associate such a description with joke books kept on a table in the house's smallest room, next to the toilet roll. But with this 160-page hardback, we mean it as a compliment.

The D-Day Kit Bag: The Ultimate Guide To The Allied Assault On Europe is a stylishly laid-out, infinitely accessible guide to the terrible and heroic events of 6 June 1944, and everyone from kit obsessives to armchair strategists and social historians will find themselves poring over the different parts of this book for hours. Clear maps and timelines of the first 24 hours of each beach assault and the ensuing advances, as well as specially photographed passes, badges, weapons and personal mementoes, along with numerous first-person accounts of the day, all conspire to bring this day of all days to life in a way that no dry historical account could hope to match. **Johnny Sharp**

WATCHING WAR FILMS WITH MY DAD

Al Murray *Arrow Publishing* **RRP £7.99**

★★★★★

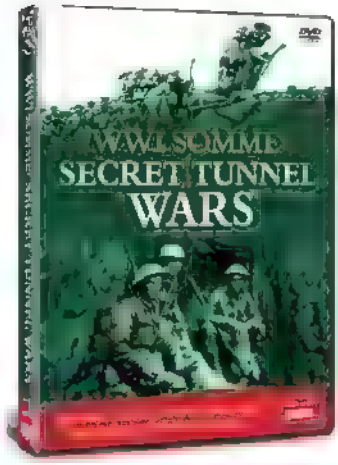
Do you sit in front of war movies saying, "That's wrong… they'd never do that!"? Do you shake your head while you're supposed to be suspending your disbelief?

Well, even if your nearest and dearest do down you, Al Murray is your friend. Although the comedian is best known for his xenophobic Pub Landlord character, he's also a lifelong war film and military-history nerd. And in this book, the impressively knowledgeable Murray combines a memoir of growing up in the golden age of the war movie with a passion for "war film pedantry", inherited from his Army officer father. He digresses at great length, rants, nitpicks and holds forth, not unlike a pub landlord (albeit a very entertaining one), but ultimately you'll forgive the slightly scattershot narrative because the combination of detailed knowledge and skilled use of humour make *Watching War Films With My Dad* a romp of a read. **Johnny Sharp**

WWI SOMME: SECRET TUNNEL WARS

Director: N/A *Demand Media* **RRP** £9

★★★★



The 2012 BBC TV programme that makes up this DVD is a timely and hugely informative investigation into an often-neglected area of the First World War – that of the brave individuals who worked beneath the French countryside, digging tunnels and chambers, and laying explosives to destroy the enemy in a game where it was very much a matter of kill or be killed.

Written, produced and presented by renowned historian and co-secretary of the All Party Parliamentary War Graves and Battlefields Heritage Group Peter Barton, *WWI Somme: Secret Tunnel Wars* takes us on a riveting tour of some of these newly opened tunnels around La Boisselle, scene of the greatest-ever British military disaster when, on 1 July 1916, the army suffered around 11,500 casualties. In his engaging style, Barton packs a fascinating amount of information, gleaned from a stream of archive sources, into the documentary's 50 minutes: from 179 Tunnelling Company's origins in the sewers of Manchester and coal mines of the north, to their first forays into establishing hidden tunnel networks hours after being conscripted; from the powerful poems left on the tunnel walls by some of these brave men, to the cables and explosives still lying there; and from the painstaking tasks of these "moles" or "clay kickers", who used bayonets to pick at the rocks, blocking the tunnels' progress, to the work of pioneers such as John Norton-Griffiths, who developed a device that could pick up the enemy's communications up to 260ft away through chalk walls.

Barton walks – or more often crawls – in the footsteps of these courageous men, many of whom were too old to fight in the infantry, had been given no military training, could not even salute properly and, "worse", could have been Scottish trade unionists. He takes us up to 25 metres down into the confined, claustrophobic chambers and tunnels (many of which have remained unseen for almost a century) where men dug in complete silence, in the stifling air, nine inches at a time.

His enthusiasm for the subject is contagious, and he relays the horror these men faced on a daily basis without being overly sentimental or resorting to hyperbole (not that he would need to anyway). Nevertheless, he does not pull punches when describing that fateful day in July when so many men were slaughtered in so short a time, thanks to an overheard telephone message that warned the Germans what the British had in mind at Y Sap and Lochnagar. The documentary hits a poignant note when Barton shows the exact spot where two poor operatives, Ezekiel Parks and John Lane, lost their lives in the massive explosion underground – their bodies lie there somewhere, undiscovered to this very day.

Barton packs a fascinating amount of information, gleaned from a stream of archive sources, into the 50 minutes

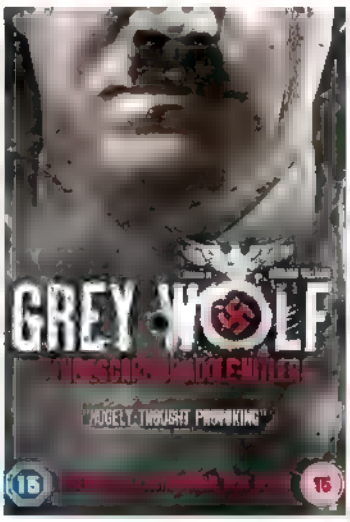
WWI Somme: Secret Tunnel Wars makes for uncomfortable viewing at times – especially if you suffer from a fear of confined spaces – but is nevertheless an essential purchase for military history buffs, not to mention a fitting tribute to those selfless men whose efforts were soon forgotten when the Great War came to an end. **Simon Lee Green**

GREY WOLF: THE ESCAPE OF ADOLF HITLER

Director: Gerrard Williams

High Fliers Films **RRP** £7

★★



In order to take this "dramatisation" of "real events" "based on real-life eyewitness accounts" seriously, you have to attempt one of the greatest suspensions of disbelief in the history of film. Perhaps not one as large as that necessitated by the recent *Godzilla* remake, but a pretty hefty one nonetheless.

Basically, the premise is this – as Berlin fell at the climax of the Second World War, neither Adolf Hitler nor his wife Eva Braun committed suicide. Instead, they were flown from the ruins of the city on April 28th, deposited at Fuerteventura in the Canary Islands, before being taken by U-boat to Argentina, where Hitler was able to live his life reasonably unmolested – although consumed by guilt, a sense of failure and the imminency of capture – until his death in 1962.

Now, it should be noted at this point that in the "Other Films Liked By People Who Liked This Film" section of Amazon, there appears *Forest Of The Living Dead* and a made-for-TV werewolf film. Which is a long-hand way of saying that it's essentially pure hokum. However, there's an interesting story behind the film – or, rather, behind the book on which the film is based. The Argentinian journalist Abel Basti accused the book's authors of plagiarism and of using his work maliciously, and the historian Guy Walters described the book as "2,000% fiction, an absolute disgrace... It appeals to the deluded fantasies of conspiracy theorists." After all that, who wouldn't be interested in seeing what it has to say? **Pete Cashmore**

THE RAILWAY MAN

Director: Jonathan Teplitzky

Lionsgate UK

RRP £9.99

★★★★

Based on a true story but not always sticking to the finer details of said story in that typical Hollywood way, *The Railway Man* recounts the remarkable life of Eric Lomax (played in wartime by Jeremy Irvine and in the later years of his life by Colin Firth), a survivor of a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp who's sent to build the Thai-Burma railway towards the end of the war. Struggling to overcome the atrocities he witnessed – and, indeed, endured, having been tortured for minor behavioural infractions – Lomax decides to seek closure by meeting one of his wartime captors.

The film isn't always entirely successful, feeling strangely like a high-class TV movie, but both Firth and Irvine, and indeed the stately Stellan Skarsgaard as Lomax's best friend, are outstanding. It's also nigh on impossible not to be moved by the final reel, as prisoner and captor finally meet. **Pete Cashmore**

MEMPHIS BELLE

Director: Michael Caton Jones

Warner Home Video

RRP £12

★★★

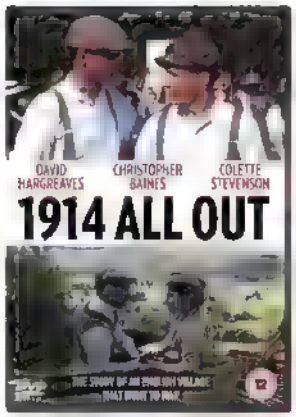
Michael Caton-Jones' 1990 film, released now on Blu-ray, tells the story of the titular Belle – an almighty US B-17 bomber based in England during the Second World War – as she embarks on her final mission. It's a heavily fictionalised account, with the names of the crew being changed, presumably to protect the poor fellow who had to be played by Harry Connick Jr (although he is, it has to be said, much less grating as an actor than he is as an ersatz crooner).

It's an interesting film, obviously being as much about the men as the aircraft itself, with a strong cast including David Strathairn, John Lithgow, Eric Stoltz and Billy Zane. And for a film that sometimes comes across as a stereotypical "American GIs living it up in polite Blighty" romp, it pulls no punches when it comes to broaching the possibility of imminent death. Swing fanatics will enjoy the soundtrack, too. **Pete Cashmore**

1914 ALL OUT

Director: David Green
Strawberry Media **RRP £12**

★★★



Originally released way back in 1987, this TV movie gets another airing to coincide with (cash in on?) the centenary of the start of the First World War. The film explores the devastating effects on a rural Yorkshire village when its young men – who also play for the local cricket team, hence the title – are sent off to fight on the battlefields of the Western Front.

The plot – penned by playwright Colin Schindler after he was moved by seeing a war memorial that paid tribute to the fallen men of a small community – has been done countless times before, most recently in the film *Private Peaceful*. Basically, two simple, happy-go-lucky brothers live normal lives in their nondescript northern village, getting up to mischief and falling in love with the same girl, before their lives are torn apart by events out of their control (namely, the fighting in Europe). But to be fair, scenarios like this were, sadly, all too common in villages and towns all over Britain when war broke out. Indeed, the optimistic prediction that "it will all be over by Christmas" – uttered in the film by one of the characters – was a sentiment that was echoed in many British households as teenage lads, destined for the frontline, sought to console their mothers.

David Green (who directed Phil Collins in the box-office smash *Buster* the year after this was released) captures the mood of the villagers without resorting to schmaltz, and the Yorkshire countryside plays its part in adding to the general watchability of the film. OK, so it's more Heartbeat than *Pearl Harbor*, but *1914 All Out* is nevertheless an accessible wartime love story that warrants a second innings. **Paul Dimery**

GENERATION WAR

Director: Philipp Kadelbach
Arrow Films **RRP £13.99**

★★★★

In recent times, there's been a glut of film and TV releases looking at war from the British or American point of view (*The Monuments Men*, *Private Peaceful* and *The Railway Man*, to name but three). So it makes for a refreshing change to follow the action from the German angle – which is exactly what's on offer in this TV series, from the co-producers of the excellent 2004 film *Downfall*.

In a plot that echoes Michael Cimino's 1978 epic *The Deer Hunter*, *Generation War* focuses on a group of Berlin friends as they're driven apart by war in the summer of 1941. Wilhelm, a career soldier, and his pacifist younger brother Friedhelm have been ordered to fight on the Eastern Front; Charlotte is heading the same way, but to serve as a nurse in a field hospital; Greta becomes a singer, and her Jewish boyfriend Viktor is sent to a concentration camp.

While there's been some debate on film forums about the programme's historical accuracy, and cynicism at the inclusion of a Jewish character to make some kind of point (ie that not all Germans were anti-Semitic), these should not cloud over what is essentially a moving piece of drama, and one that's superbly acted and well shot. *Generation War* makes a valid point that millions of everyday people – on both sides – lose not just their loved ones, hopes and dreams, but also their innocence during times of war. And although it makes that point in a different language, it's a sentiment that's tragically universal. **Paul Dimery**

STALAG LUFT

Director: Adrian Shergold
Strawberry Media **RRP £13**

★★★

Something of an oddity, this is a 1993 TV movie parodying the genre of POW-escape films. Stephen Fry has tremendous fun as RAF Captain James Forrester – indeed, he probably sees it as the role he was born to play, being as it is a more self-aware Melchett from *Blackadder Goes Forth*, complete with resplendent moustache. Geoffrey Palmer is less impressive and, dare we say it, miscast as the Kommandant of the German guards, who veer between comic ineptitude and outright slackerism as it becomes apparent that their Stalag Luft is a far from impregnable fortress, being instead laughably pregnable.

One of the odd little running gags is that Fry's character is something of a bluff homophobe, at one point expressing astonishment that a Scottish POW could actually be gay. Rather more effective is the POWs' carrier pigeon, which is, on this occasion, a parrot, the painfully obvious but no less humorous twist being that they don't attach a message to its leg, they simply repeat the message over and over until the parrot has memorised it.

As the film progresses, the POWs have to impersonate the Germans as the lackadaisical camp is suddenly subjected to a harsh inspection, at which point it descends into slightly uncomfortable and stilted farce; and there's an oddly unsatisfying ending in the offing. But writer David Nobbs is a dab hand at wisecrackery, having written for, among others, *The Two Ronnies*, so there are one or two decent laughs along the way. **Pete Cashmore**

WORLD WAR ONE ALMANAC

Windows phone app
Silver Dollar Software **Free**

★

I was looking forward to seeing what this app had to offer. An almanac, by definition, is a collection of useful and/or interesting facts, and the invite was to "Browse the key figures of the Great War". The thumbnail portraits of notable characters involved with the conflict looked promising. There was, however, no clear navigable structure allowing me to comfortably browse, and I often found myself lost or looking at a blank page. The information, when found, comprised of an image and a very short biography linked to an often-elusive page of attributes.

In all, there were only perhaps 20 or so – admittedly interesting – individuals to read about, as far as I could find, and the main purpose of this app appeared to be the ever present and distracting advertisements. There was an option to remove these annoyances, but I was invited to pay to do so. You won't be surprised to learn that I declined. Disappointingly scant. **Robin Worboyes**

SURVIVAL GUIDE

IPhone app *Max Soderstrom* **Free**

★★★

Here we have a reasonably exhaustive and, of course, free app detailing a whole load of survival tips, based on those issued by the United States military. There's advice on how to keep your head in a survival situation, maintain your equipment, produce basic medicine, find food and water, prepare a shelter, and avoid eating anything in the natural world that's going to give you rather more than just a dicky tummy. There's also exhaustive advice on how to negotiate water hazards (and we're not talking golf here). It wraps things up by giving you suggestions on how you might manage to get yourself found and taken back to safety.

How much of this will actually come in usual to the average joe who lives in a three-bed semi in, say, the West Midlands remains to be seen but, even if you never use the advice, Survival Guide is nevertheless an interesting source of information that will cost you precisely nothing. **Pete Cashmore**

The Ten Greatest WORLD WAR I FILMS

Like the conflict itself, movies about the First World War are set on land, on sea and in the air, across all parts of the globe. And, as Nick Soldinger explains, in many cases they're absolutely era-defining...

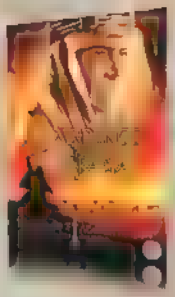
ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

Director **Lewis Milestone, 1930**

This classic was made just 12 years after the Armistice. Its portrayal of the cost of carnage on the Western Front proved shocking to audiences at the time, and its scenes of mechanised slaughter and hand-to-hand killing still have the power to disturb. Based on Erich Maria Remarque's novel – which drew on his own experience of the trenches – it follows the story of a young German patriot who enlists in the army and, with his school chums, marches off to war in search of glory. What he finds, however, is terror and death. It cost $1.2m to make, featured 2,000 extras and won four Oscars. Undoubtedly, the granddaddy of all WWI movies.

2 LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

Director **David Lean, 1962**



Not just a great First World War movie, *Lawrence Of Arabia* is one of the finest films ever made. David Lean was arguably Britain's best-ever director, and his portrayal of that tortured soul T E Lawrence (played to perfection by Peter O'Toole) against the epic backdrop of a shimmering Sahara Desert is an undoubted masterpiece. Based on Lawrence's memoir *The Seven Pillars Of Wisdom*, the film follows his guerrilla campaign as he leads the Arab Revolt on early attacks against the Hejaz railway, its against-all-the-odds victory at Aqaba, and its role in eventually capturing Damascus. The movie is every bit as brave as its subject matter, referencing both Lawrence's rape at the hands of his Turkish captors, and Britain's ultimate betrayal of the Arabs at the war's end. Essential viewing.

3 PATHS OF GLORY

Director **Stanley Kubrick, 1957**

Injustice and the use of the masses for the benefit of the ruling classes inform Stanley Kubrick's first great work. An independent movie made nearly 30 years after *All Quiet On The Western Front*, it cost half a million dollars less than its predecessor but achieves a similar impact in both its message and its portrayal of trench-warfare savagery. The story focuses on a trial in which three French soldiers face the death penalty for cowardice after failing to take a German position. But the mission's lack of success, and the kangaroo court they face as a result, have nothing to do with their lack of courage and everything to do with the machinations of the men who organised them. In 1969, lead actor Kirk Douglas said of the film, "There's a picture that will always be good, years from now I don't have to wait 50 years to know that; I know it now." Masterful stuff.

4 THE AFRICAN QUEEN

Director **John Huston, 1951**

Based on C S Forester's novel of the same name, this Hollywood favourite starring Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn is set in German East Africa at the start of hostilities. Hepburn plays a prissy missionary whose brother dies after a beating by Germans, while Bogart plays a boozy, so-rough-you-can-almost-smell-him riverboat captain who comes to her aid. Together, they dream up a plan to convert his leaky old tub, *The African Queen*, into a torpedo boat, sail it down the Ulonga-Bora River to where a German gunship – based on the real-life SMS Königsberg – is patrolling and sink it. It's a love story essentially, but a love story featuring river rapids, shoot-outs and explosions!

5 GALLIPOLI

Director **Peter Weir, 1981**

Part coming-of-age yarn, part action-adventure movie, *Gallipoli* has arguably done more to promote the image of ANZAC heroism and suffering during the disastrous Dardanelles offensive than anything else in popular culture. This tear-jerking tale about two mates from rural Australia who get entangled in one of history's most calamitous military misadventures has had a powerful effect on both Australian national identity and perceptions of the campaign itself. The movie's inference that it was an Aussie-only tragedy – fought exclusively by ANZACS, led to the slaughter by incompetent British officers – is inaccurate. Indeed, British casualties were around ten times higher than that of their Antipodean comrades. *Gallipoli* is still a top war flick, though.

6 OH! WHAT A LOVELY WAR

Director **Richard Attenborough, 1969**

Based on a radio production that was later turned into a stage play, *Oh! What A Lovely War* is a satirical interpretation of the insanity that gripped the world between 1914 and 1918. The film is both funny and inventive, using bawdy music-hall songs and allegorical settings to ensure that its anti-war message never becomes a sermon. The war is presented as a new attraction on Brighton Pier, where General Haig sells tickets to the amusements within, including a shooting gallery and a scoreboard for totting up casualties. Much of the story focuses on an archetypal British family – the Smiths – and the fortunes of its five sons, who all buy a ticket. The final scene, which shows an idyllic family picnic in what turns out to be a vast graveyard, is a heartbreaker.

7 JOHNNY GOT HIS GUN

Director **Dalton Trumbo, 1971**

This anti-war film flirts with the surreal to get its message across, but is no less impactful for that. It tells the story of a young American soldier who's left a quadruple amputee, and without eyes, ears, a mouth or a nose after being blown up on the Western Front. Fully conscious but imprisoned by his injuries, he floats between fantasy, memory and reality, struggling with what's happened to him. The film's ending, during which he taps out a Morse-code message with his head, asking doctors to either put him out of his misery or in a freak show as a warning to others about the horrors of war, is as moving as anything on this list.

8 JOYEUX NOEL

Director **Christian Carion, 2005**

Joyeux Noel is a visually splendid retelling of the Christmas Truce of 1914, when soldiers on opposing sides called an impromptu ceasefire on the Western Front, clambered out of their trenches and met in no man's land to exchange gifts, drink schnapps and have a game of football. The film recounts the story from three sides and in three different languages – French, German and, erm, Scottish. It's sentimental stuff but, amid the Christmas-movie mawkishness, there's a powerful point being made. Yes, there's a murderous instinct in human nature, but there's also a powerful capacity for sympathy, and the battle between those two for supremacy of our souls is as relevant today as it was in 1914.

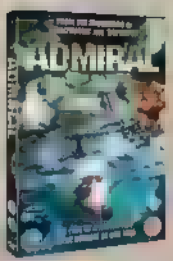
9 FLYBOYS

Director **Tony Bill, 2006**

Like Jack Gold's 1976 epic *Aces High*, *Flyboys* tells the story of aerial combat during the First World War. However, unlike that earlier film – which is essentially a retelling of R C Sherriff's play *Journey's End* – this isn't so much an anti-war parable as an excuse to explore the thrill of death matches fought 20,000 feet above the ground. OK, so it's about as deep as a puddle of split Coca-Cola, but its tale of the Lafayette Escadrille – the real-life American pilots who volunteered to fight for the French before the US entered the war in April 1917 – is Hollywood theme-park cinema in excelsis (think a First World War version of *Top Gun* and you'll be close). *Aces High* is undoubtedly more profound, and Howard Hughes' 1930 all-my-own-stunts opus *Hell's Angels* is definitely a more remarkable achievement, but, once it takes off, this film is way more entertaining

10 ADMIRAL

Director **Andrey Kravchuk, 2008**



Russian cinema isn't to everybody's taste, partly because it can have a melodramatic element to it that makes Hollywood storytelling seem sober by comparison. But if you can get past that aspect of this hagiographic flick about the life and loves of Alexander Kolchak – a brooding, Putinesque imperialist who first fought the Germans at sea, before engaging the Bolsheviks on land – you'll at least get some sense of the vastness of the turmoil Russia endured during and after the First World War. Costing around $20million, *Admiral* holds the record for being the most expensive Russian movie ever made – and boy, does it show. The setpiece sea battles and street fights, as war and then the chaos of revolution kick in, are as impressive as anything *Flyboys* achieves in the air.

WAR in NUMBERS

THE WARS OF THE ROSES

Adding up the 1455-87 battles between the **Houses of Lancaster and York**

5

There were five Kings of England during the Wars of the Roses: Henry VI (twice), Edward IV (twice), Edward V, Richard III and Henry VII.

3

There were three distinct phases to the wars: a long, bloody battle that resulted in a York victory, then a rebellion within the York family and, finally, a battle fought between Richard III and Henry Tudor (Henry VII), which resulted in the establishment of the Tudor dynasty.

7

▲ The siege of Lancastrian stronghold Harlech Castle, North Wales, lasted seven years from 1461-68.

12

After Edward IV's death, his 12-year-old son Edward V became King of England. However, Edward and his younger brother Richard later disappeared from the Tower of London, believed to have been murdered on the orders of their uncle, Richard III.

32

▲ The wars spanned 32 years – the longest period of civil war in English history.

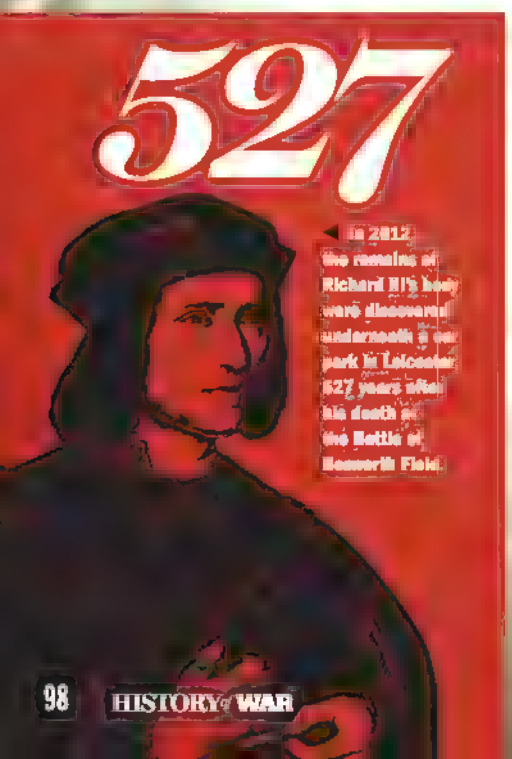
2

▲ The name "Wars of the Roses" refers to the emblems of the two sides: the White Rose of York and the Red Rose of Lancaster.

105,000

▲ The estimated total number of people killed during the wars.

527



▲ In 2012 the remains of Richard III's body were discovered underneath a car park in Leicester 527 years after his death at the Battle of Bosworth Field.

60,000

▲ One of the largest scuffles was the Battle of Towton in North Yorkshire on 29 March 1461, where some 60,000 soldiers fought and 28,000 were killed.

2

While the Wars of the Roses technically ended in 1485, King Henry VII had to spend two more years putting down any claimants to his throne.

1st

The first battle was fought in St Albans, Hertfordshire, on 22 May 1455. There was a second battle in the town on 17 February 1461.

6'4

▲ Edward IV stood at an impressive 6ft 4in (6ft 7in in full armour), making him the tallest British King ever.

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▲

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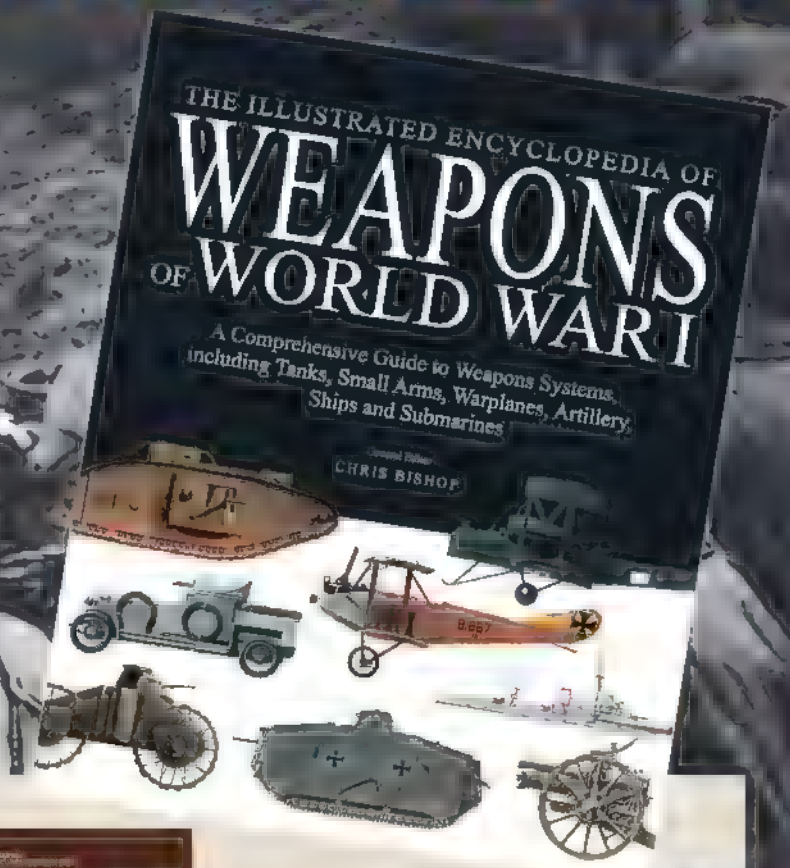
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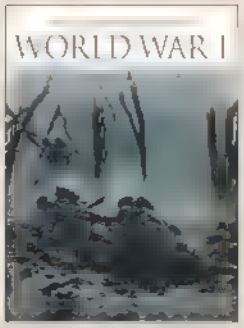

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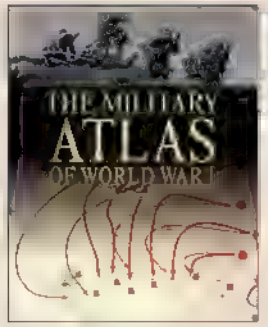

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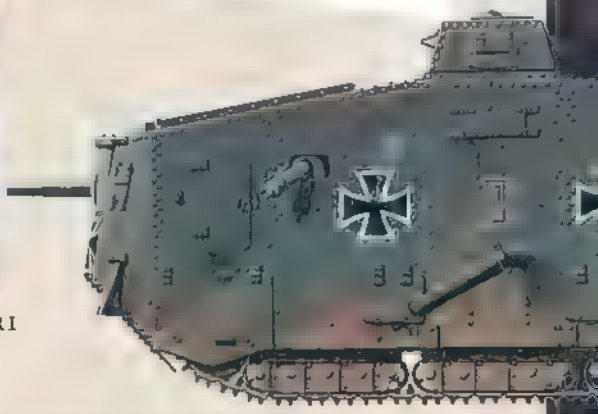

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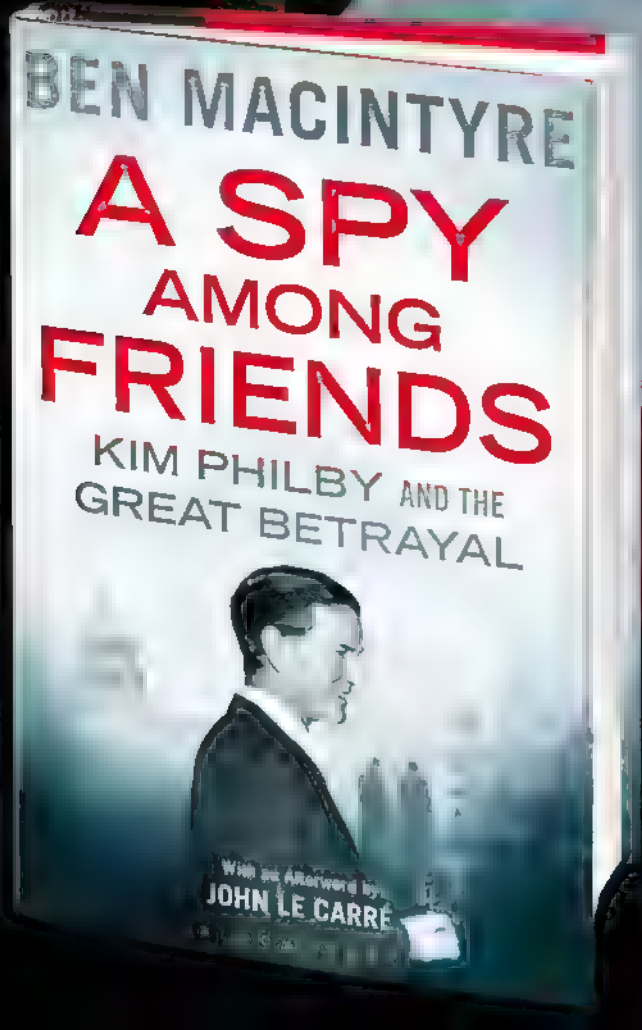

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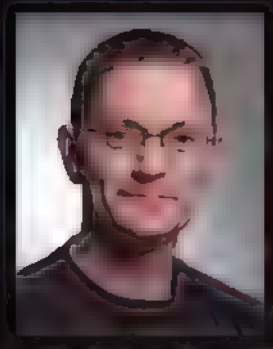

Welcome

This year, as we all know, marks the centenary of the beginning of the First World War. To commemorate this momentous occasion, we at *History Of War* magazine decided it would be appropriate to publish a photo supplement filled with images that are both stunning and poignant. Images from throughout the conflict, taken within a variety of battle zones across the globe. No one really knows what the Great War cost in terms of military casualties, though estimates place the number of dead in excess of five million, with a further four million missing. Over 12 million were injured, many with life-changing effects, and all suffered the trauma of fighting in some of the fiercest battles known to man. It was a war that truly affected everyone, and that will never be forgotten.
To all who fought, we salute you.

Paul Pettengale *Editorial Director*
paul.pettengale@anthem-publishing.com

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DEFENDER OF THE REALM *1914*
This poignant picture, entitled *Grey Dawn On The Battlefield, British Cavalry, Belgian Frontier*, was used to illustrate HW Wilson's 1914 book *The Great War Vol 1*.

FOR KING AND COUNTRY *5 August 1914* The day after England officially declared war on Germany, a huge crowd gathers outside Buckingham Palace in London. Judging by the hats raised in the air, the majority of people fully support the move.

A SALUTE FOR THE SOLDIERS *1914* A young boy in full replica British Army uniform pays tribute to troops fighting overseas. During the war, it was common for middle- and upper-class children to emulate their heroes by dressing up in military garb.

OFF TO WAR 1914 British soldiers, including two recruits who have brought along some chickens, pose at London's Waterloo railway station en route to the Western Front

WWI CENTENARY

ON THE FRONTLINE

Taken **1914**

If you were ever in any doubt as to the bleak nature of warfare, this picture sums it up in devastating detail. German troops move carefully along their trench, waiting for the right moment to return fire and knowing that one false move could result in death. This kind of attritional combat went on for months at a time, with neither side making much progress and morale slowly ebbing away.

A MOMENT'S RESPITE *1914* German soldiers sleep in their snow-covered trench near the Aisne River valley in France as two of their comrades stand guard with rifles poised. Sleep was a precious commodity for frontline troops, and you were lucky if you got any at all.

I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU *1914* German sharpshooters move towards the frontline near the Aisne River in France. These men were highly trained and incredibly effective, meaning that they often caused panic and demoralisation among British units.

DUG IN FOR BATTLE *1914*
British troops ready themselves for another assault. In the early stages of the war, trenches were often of very simple construction, with soldiers expected to fight shoulder to shoulder – a tactic that inflicted huge casualties from artillery fire.

WWI CENTENARY

DEATH FROM THE SKY

Taken **1918**

The First World War is synonymous with trench warfare, but as our feature in this month's *History Of War* explains in some detail it was a global conflict fought across many different theatres, one of which was the high seas. Control of the waves was vital to enable the transportation of supplies and troops. In this picture, an Allied plane scores a direct hit on a German ship.

GREAT SCOTS *1914*
A section of Seaforth Highlanders regroup in their trench. The Scottish regiment was heavily involved in the Battle of the Aisne, in which it suffered heavy casualties.

A HOME FROM HOME *1914* **French officers dine in style in a trench near the frontline. Their men did not enjoy the same level of luxury, as it was often impossible to transport decent hot food from the field kitchens to the trenches, particularly in the midst of battle.**

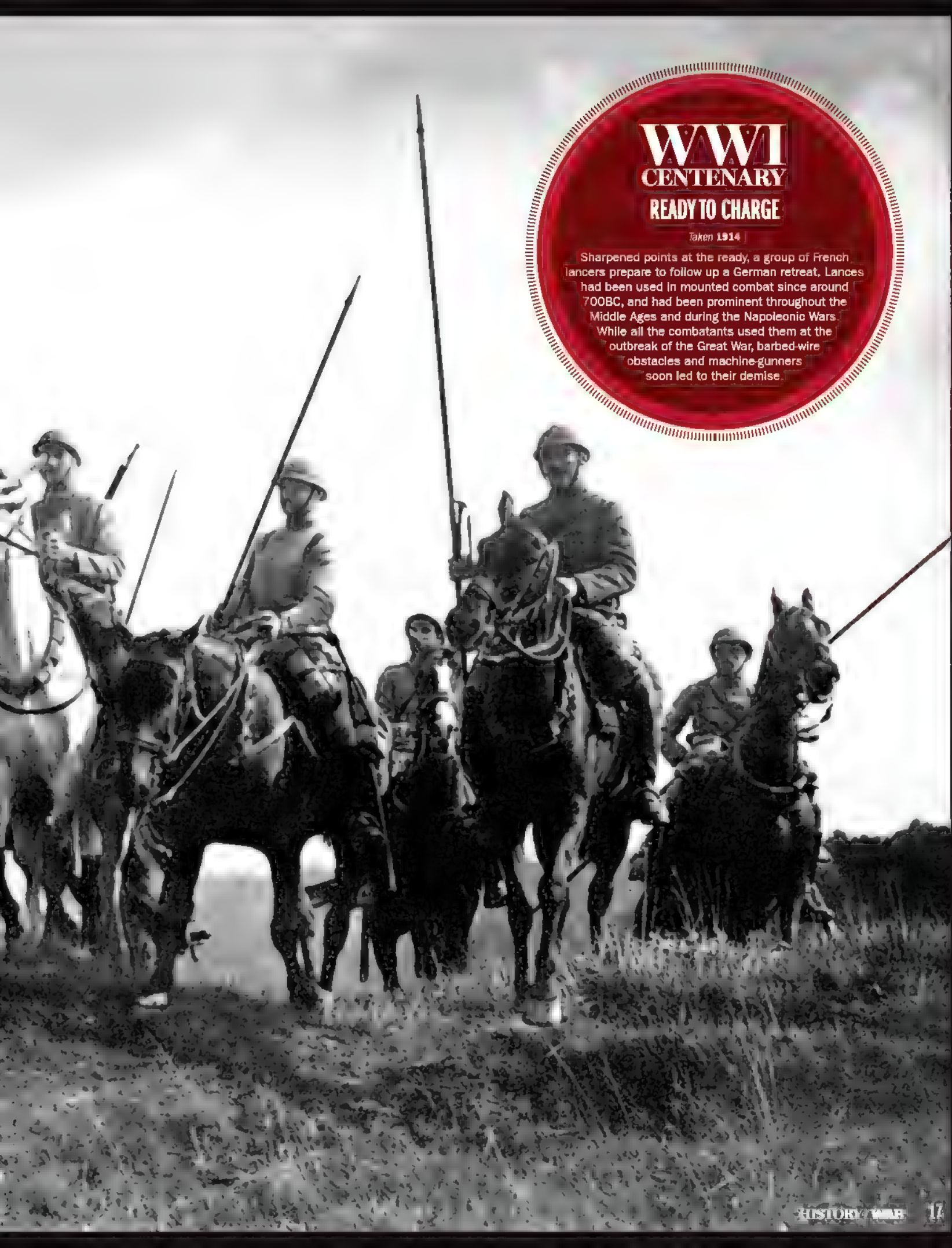
BEING PATCHED UP 1914
In this picture by Australian war photographer Frank Hurley, British "Tommies" relax and have their wounds treated in an underground dressing station near the Menin Road [illegible]vance. Some soldiers used stolen moments such as these to sketch and pen letters to loved ones.

SECRET HIDEAWAY *1914*
A French soldier reads his mail while hiding in a hollow tree. Letters from wives, girlfriends and families were instrumental in helping troops through the hardest times.

THE NAME GAME *1915* A young British soldier uses a break in fighting to paint the names of trenches on wooden signs. The names include King's Cross, Devil's Dyke, Potsdam Place, Happy Alley and Love Lane.

DEPTHS OF DESPAIR *1915* The comforts of home seem like a long way away to these Allied troops as they recover from a German offensive in Meuse-Argonne, France. The area was the scene of another fierce battle in 1918.

KILLING MACHINE *1915* Think of WWI and your mind conjures up images of rifles with bayonets attached. But there were other, far more deadly weapons at work, too, such as this 80mm mountain gun, used for launching mines.

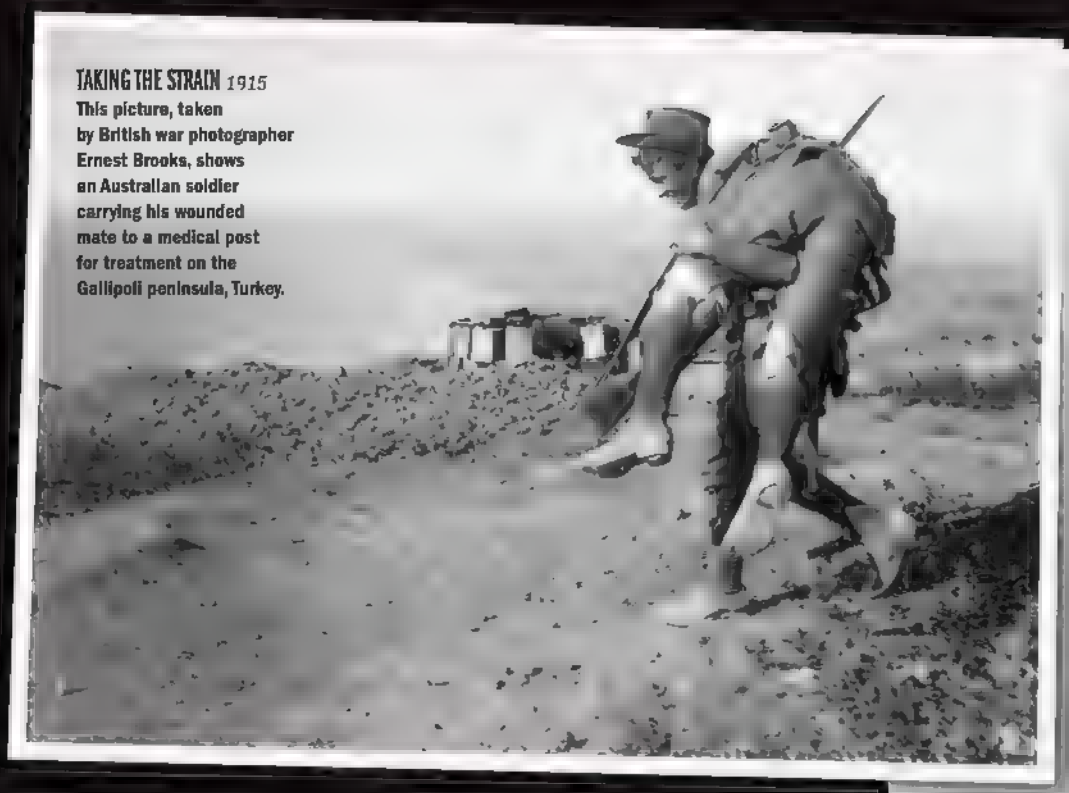


WWI CENTENARY

READY TO CHARGE

Taken **1914**

Sharpened points at the ready, a group of French lancers prepare to follow up a German retreat. Lances had been used in mounted combat since around 700BC, and had been prominent throughout the Middle Ages and during the Napoleonic Wars. While all the combatants used them at the outbreak of the Great War, barbed-wire obstacles and machine-gunners soon led to their demise.

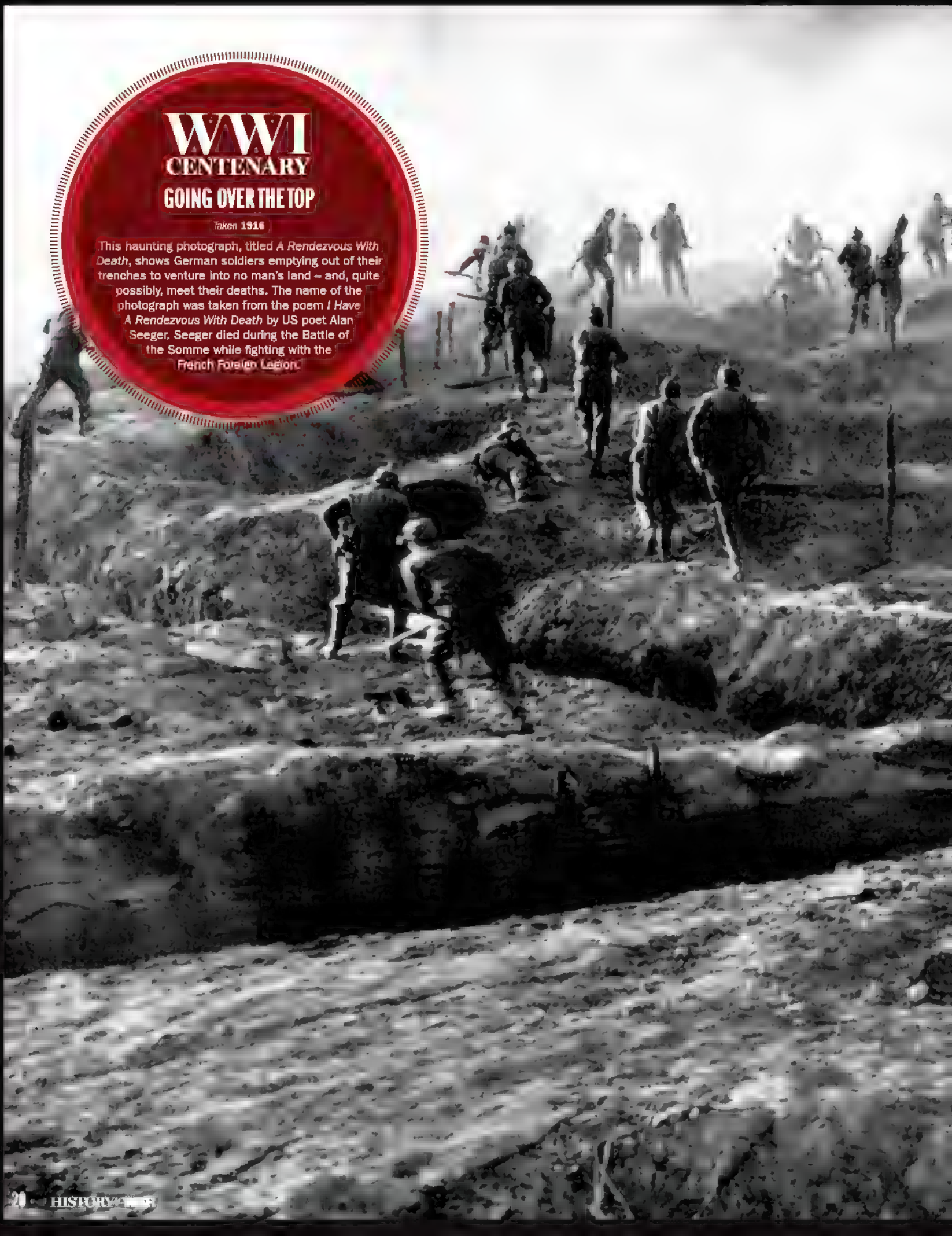


TAKING THE STRAIN *1915*
This picture, taken by British war photographer Ernest Brooks, shows an Australian soldier carrying his wounded mate to a medical post for treatment on the Gallipoli peninsula, Turkey.

OI, OVER HERE! *1915* In another photograph by Ernest Brooks, a Royal Irish Fusilier attempts to draw the fire of a Turkish sniper and reveal his position, Gallipoli peninsula, Turkey. The Gallipoli campaign lasted from 25 April 1915 to 9 January 1916.

BRINGING OUT THE BIG GUNS *1915*

A 60-pounder artillery battery in action on the Gallipoli peninsula, as captured by Ernest Brooks. Berkshire-born Brooks was the first official photographer appointed by the British military.



WWI CENTENARY

GOING OVER THE TOP

Taken **1916**

This haunting photograph, titled *A Rendezvous With Death*, shows German soldiers emptying out of their trenches to venture into no man's land – and, quite possibly, meet their deaths. The name of the photograph was taken from the poem *I Have A Rendezvous With Death* by US poet Alan Seeger. Seeger died during the Battle of the Somme while fighting with the French Foreign Legion.

WWI
CENTENARY
WHAT GOES UP...
Taken May 1916
Following an unsuccessful raid on targets in England, and running low on fuel, Zeppelin L20 makes a forced landing off the coast of Norway. During its four months in service, the German airship made a total of 19 flights, including six reconnaissance missions and two successful bombing raids over England. After crashing into the sea, its crew destroyed the ship. Sixteen were captured and three died.

L20

BROKEN LAND This aerial photograph, revealing the difficult terrain frontline soldiers had to traverse in order to make any progress. The land has been devastated by bomb craters, making it treacherous to walk across.

KEEPING SPIRITS UP *1916* Allied troops enjoy a sing-song during a break in fighting. Popular ditties of the day included *I Were A Big Red Rose, Keep The Home Fires Burning* and *It's A Long Way To Tipperary*.

COVERING THEIR TRACKS *1916* Following the disastrous Gallipoli campaign where they were crushed by Ottoman forces, the Allies were forced to flee from the Dardanelles. As they did so, they destroyed much of their old materiel.

WWI CENTENARY

MARCHING TOWARDS DESTINY

Taken **1917**

There's a certain poignancy to this picture as a battalion of faceless troops are silhouetted against the night sky. They are soldiers of the 1st Australian Division, marching towards Broodseinde in Flanders, where around 20,000 of their comrades were killed or injured the day before (4 October). With so many dying every day, it's easy to forget that these men were human beings and not just statistics.

DEADLY DELIVERIES *1917* Two women munitions workers make some final tweaks to shells at National Shell Filling Factory No 6 in Chilwell, Nottinghamshire. During the First World War, the factory filled high explosives into some 19 million shells.

SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME *1918* A British nurse attends to wounded soldiers in a makeshift hospital close to the frontline. Around 90,000 people volunteered to work as medics during the war. However, it wasn't until February 1915 that the War Office allowed these to be deployed in Royal Army Medical Corps hospitals.

A CALL TO FARMS *1916*

Members of the Women's Land Army smile as they hold their tools aloft. The British Board of Agriculture implemented the initiative in 1915 and by the end of 1917, there were around quarter of a million "Land Girls" working on British farms.

WWI CENTENARY

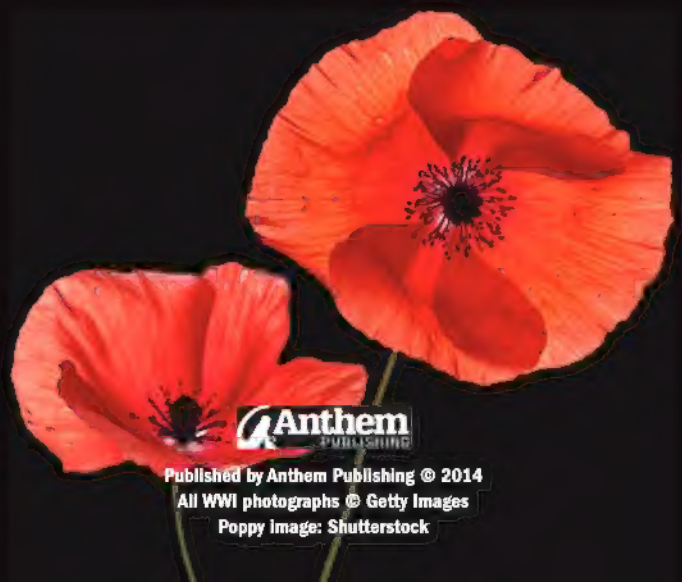
IN THE THICK OF IT

Taken **1918**

Enveloped by smoke, visibility is limited for these soldiers of the US 23rd Infantry 2nd Division as they fire a 37mm machine gun at a German position in the Argonne Forest, during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. The campaign, one of a series of decisive attacks known collectively as the Hundred Days Offensive, was the largest in US military history, with 1.2 million American soldiers involved.

▲ **WAR IS OVER** *11 November 1918* **Jubilation is etched onto the faces of these American people as they brandish copies of *The Washington Times*, its headlines announcing that Germany has surrendered and the war has come to an end.**

HISTORY WAR



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